

TRACTS.

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED

BY THE UNITARIAN SOCIETY

FOR PROMOTING CHRISTIAN KNOWLEDGE

AND THE PRACTICE OF VIRTUE.

VOL. II.

CONTAINING,

SIX TRACTS, IN VINDICATION OF THE WORSHIP

OF ONE GOD.

LONDON:

PRINTED, MDCCXCI.

1870

THE NEW YORK

AND THE

FOR

AND THE

VOL. 1

CONTENTS

THE NEW YORK

FOR

THE NEW YORK

SIX TRACTS,
IN VINDICATION OF THE WORSHIP
OF
ONE GOD.

LONDON;

PRINTED MDCCXCIV.

SIX FRAGMENTS

IN VINDICATION OF THE WORSHIP

OF THE GOD

OF THE UNIVERSE

CONTENTS.

- I. DR. DISNEY'S FRIENDLY DIALOGUE, BETWEEN A COMMON UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN AND AN ATHANASIAN: TOGETHER WITH, A SECOND DIALOGUE BETWEEN EUGENIUS AND THEOPHILUS, ON THE SAME SUBJECT.
- II. ——— REASONS FOR RESIGNING THE RECTORY OF PANTON, AND VICARAGE OF SWINDERBY, IN LINCOLNSHIRE, AND QUITTING THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.
- III. A LETTER TO THE REV. MR. D——, BY A LAYMAN.
- IV. AN EXHORTATION TO ALL CHRISTIAN PEOPLE TO REFRAIN FROM TRINITARIAN WORSHIP.
- V. AND VI. MR. FRENDS'S FIRST AND SECOND ADDRESS TO THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AND TO PROTESTANT TRINITARIANS IN GENERAL.

CONTENTS

I. THE DISNEY'S FRIENDLY DIALOGUE, BE-
TWEEN A COMMON UNITARIAN CHUR-
CHAN AND AN ATRIAN, TOGETHER
WITH A SECOND DIALOGUE BETWEEN
DISNEY'S AND THEOPHILUS, ON THE
SAME SUBJECT.

II. ——— REASONS FOR RESIGNING THE
TOWNSHIP OF BANTON, AND VICARAGE
OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AND
GOING TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

III. A LETTER TO THE REV. J. D. BY
A LAYMAN.

IV. AN EXHORTATION TO ALL CHRISTIAN
PEOPLE TO REFRAIN FROM TRINITY-
DAY WORSHIP.

V. MR. FLETCHER'S FIRST AND SECOND
ADDRESSES TO THE MEMBERS OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND, AND TO PROTEST-
ANT TRINITARIANS IN GENERAL.

A
FRIENDLY DIALOGUE:

BETWEEN

A COMMON UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN,

AND

AN ATHANASIAN;

Occasioned by the former's behaviour during
some part of the public service.

OR,

AN ATTEMPT TO RESTORE
SCRIPTURE FORMS OF WORSHIP.

To which is added

A SECOND DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

EUGENIUS AND THEOPHILUS,

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

Jesus answered; the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.

MARK xii. 29, 30, 31.

When ye pray, say, Our Father, &c.

LUKE xi. 2.

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following little tract (viz. the first of the two following dialogues) being now reprinted by the editor, with very considerable alterations, it is no more than justice to the author to say, that he is no longer answerable for the contents of it. His learning, and his christian spirit and temper, deserve all praise; his name is not mentioned, but his works will follow him.

January 1st,
1784.

[Reprinted from the second edition, 1787.]

P R E F A C E.

THE following Dialogue is designed for the use of common christians, who, by experience, are found competent judges of the doctrine here contended for, when it is delivered in its native simplicity, as it was first preached by Christ and his apostles. Plain scripture-facts are adapted to all capacities, and cannot be overthrown by all the learned sophistry in the world. It is to be hoped, that there are amongst us many rational christians, who will distribute such little tracts, in order to help forward the glorious work of another reformation, which, though the times are favourable in many respects, is very much obstructed by irreligion on one side, and superstition and enthusiasm on the other.

PREFACE

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE unexpected demand which has been made for the former impression of the first Dialogue, has given occasion for the re-publication of it. A second is now added to the present edition; and, in this last discussion of the subject, the author has conducted his two friends to a perfect agreement in opinion and practice, upon principles which appeared, in the end, equally conclusive to both of them.

The first dialogue was re-printed in Philadelphia, in 1785; a circumstance which affords some hopes that it may be useful on the other side of the Atlantic: and more particularly as the wisdom of the American states hath not imposed those impediments to the free progress of the true faith of the gospel of Christ, which have been unhappily adopted and retained in Europe.

The writer has only to add, that his fervent prayer to God is, that in proportion as the knowledge of the truth shall spread, the greater purity of life and consistency of conduct may prevail throughout the christian world.

October 15,

1787.

JOHN DISNEY.

A

FRIENDLY DIALOGUE.

ATHANASIAN. Neighbour, as I always thought you a person of a serious turn of mind, and have frequently observed your exemplary conduct in the public worship, your behaviour this day, at church, gave me great surprise, and indeed uneasiness, because you seemed to treat some parts of our excellent liturgy with disregard. You used to repeat, after the minister, the four first petitions of the litany, in a devout and solemn manner; and to join in every part of our liturgy, so justly celebrated by great numbers of pious and learned men. But I took notice this day, at church, you put on a silent indifference, when GOD THE SON, GOD THE HOLY GHOST, and the THREE PERSONS in the trinity were invoked; neither did you seem to give your assent to the doxology, so frequently directed, to FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. You seemed likewise not to join in the latter end of those prayers, which conclude with the doctrine of the

trinity in unity, so plainly and solemnly established by our glorious church, and confirmed by the learned pains of many excellent writers. I should be glad to know the true reason of this surprising change; and make no doubt but you will readily explain yourself upon these religious points, as you and I have had frequent conferences upon subjects of scripture.

UNITARIAN. Why, really, neighbour, I acknowledge the justness of your charge. As my sentiments are very different from those I formerly embraced, and was educated in; so I think it my duty to act consistently with my principles, and to profess and practise, in religious matters, according to the dictates of my conscience. There was a little book, published some years ago, under the title of, AN APPEAL TO THE COMMON SENSE OF ALL CHRISTIAN PEOPLE, &c. written by a *country clergyman*. And since then, another small tract entitled, AN APPEAL TO THE SERIOUS AND CANDID PROFESSORS OF CHRISTIANITY*: these I have carefully

* The third and last edition of the *Appeal to common sense*, by the late Rev. William Hopkins, vicar of Bolney, in Suffex, was published 1775, by Mr. Johnson, in St. Paul's-church-yard. Mr. Hopkins died in April, 1786, in the 80th year of his age, and some memoirs of his life and writings, (by the editor of this treatise,)

fully read, considered, and compared with scripture, and more particularly with regard to the article of religious worship, which is of a practical nature; and profess myself deeply convinced, by the express determination of Christ and his apostles, that the church-worship offered up to Jesus Christ, the messenger of God, and to the holy spirit; and to the trinity, as being three persons, and one God, is false and unscriptural, from whence, I think, it necessarily follows, that the famous athanasian doctrine of three co-equal persons in one God, has no foundation in the word of God.

ATHANASIAN. Oh, my friend! you astonish me by such a bold declaration; and I beg of you, for the sake of your future happiness, to take heed, and beware how you run into a dangerous heresy, before you have weighed this important business with a cool and unprejudiced mind. What! is it possible to imagine that so many wise and good men should have been so grievously mistaken, as to be guilty of false worship in their solemn address to almighty God? Don't you know, that our liturgy
was

treatise,) were the next year prefixed to the remaining copies of his *Appeal*. For an account of the original publication of this first dialogue, see pp. xiv. and xv. of the memoirs.—The *Appeal to the professors of christianity*, and the tracts connected with it, are also sold by J. Johnson in St. Paul's church-yard.

was compiled by pious and learned men ; and that it has been celebrated by several excellent writers, as the most perfect and christian form of public devotion in the whole christian world ? You should, therefore, suspect, that these authors have imposed on your judgment by some delusive arts, when their arguments have a tendency to draw you off from an important part of religious worship, settled and determined by the venerable fathers of the church of England, established by acts of parliament and convocation, and strongly enforced by a pious and learned clergy.

UNITARIAN. I am obliged to you, my good friend, for your advice, as I am well assured it proceeds from a kind regard for my spiritual welfare. But I can seriously declare, that my conviction has not been hasty : in the course of my inquiry, I made all possible objections to the doctrines delivered in both these APPEALS, for the very reason you assign ; and I thought it strange and unaccountable, that such an excellent church should have continued so long in an error that breaks in upon the true character of the one God and Father of all, and the holy and only worship admitted, practised, and directed by Christ and his apostles. And, in order to convince you of my sincerity in this grand affair, I must acquaint you that I sent for several answers to these publications, which have been written by learned persons ; and have also carefully examined some defences of them.

Upon

Upon the most sincere and impartial inquiry, not without earnest applications to the God of truth, for the direction of his holy spirit in my religious disquisitions, I profess myself an UNITARIAN CHRISTIAN, or a firm believer in one supreme God and Father of all, as a principle of natural as well as revealed religion. I see with my own eyes, and perceive with my own understanding, that it is my duty to worship and pray to the one God and Father of all, in the name of, or as the disciple of Jesus Christ, for the assistance of his holy spirit and guidance; and think it lawful to offer up petitions to none other, except the invisible and self-existent creator and governor of the world, the one only living and true God. As our lord commanded no worship or prayer to be made to himself, and directed his apostles and others, to pray only to God, our Father, who is in heaven; and they taught their disciples the same: surely, to pay religious worship to any other, must be judged, by every unprejudiced christian, as an instance of will-worship, not warranted by the word of God; and, consequently, such unscriptural forms of devotion ought to be laid aside, though established by the authority of wise and learned men. With respect to the worship of the trinity in unity, or three persons and one God, not even the least colour of evidence can be produced for it; every form of worship set forth by Christ and his apostles is absolutely inconsistent with it. It is certainly worshipping God
under

under a false character, or *we know not what*, (John iv. 22.) when we offer up prayers to a Being, consisting of three co-equal persons, contrary to the light of reason and scripture; and I am afraid this religious practice too nearly approaches to the crime of some degree of idolatry, as no such being exists in the universe.

ATHANASIAN. Surely you must labour under some very great mistake, when you make such confident declarations regarding forms of worship, that have been deduced from scripture by so many learned men; and have been defended in so many excellent books, written by persons of almost every denomination of christians, as well as of the church of England. Have you, my friend, carefully examined every part of scripture relating to religious worship? Have not the authors of these APPEALS concealed some considerable evidence, in order to gain their cause? Though my memory, at present, does not furnish me with any particular passages, where the second, third, and fourth petitions of the litany are found in express terms; yet I am persuaded that these forms of worship are warranted by scripture, as our church, which professes the highest regard for scripture, and is founded upon it, has so long recommended and enforced the whole litany-worship: and you must allow that the church of England has been blessed with many excellent members, remarkable for their piety, as well as learning; and, consequently, I cannot think

think of departing from their religious sentiments, without the clearest and strongest evidence, drawn from the word of God.

UNITARIAN. We of this nation ought to bless God for the inestimable advantages of the free use of the holy scriptures in the vulgar tongue. In the name of God, let every declaration of Christ and his apostles, relating to religious worship, be examined and considered with the greatest care; and let this important cause be determined by divine and not human authority. I can sincerely tell you a plain matter of fact, that after having very accurately compared the new Testament, with the collection of texts relating to religious worship in both these APPEALS, I could not find one passage omitted; so that the authors of them cannot be charged with concealing any part of the evidence, in order to gain their cause, according to the too common practice of party writers.

My good friend, do but admit, as your protestant profession, and your seeming regard for scripture requires, that the authority of Christ and his apostles is of greater weight than the decrees of even wise and learned men, and you will soon be convinced that the athanasian, or trinitarian worship is false and unscriptural. I will endeavour to point out to you a plain method of gaining intire satisfaction upon this important subject.—*It came to pass that as he (viz. Christ) was praying in a certain place, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord teach us to pray, as John also*

also taught his disciples. (Luke xi. 1.) Now, the grand question is, what answer our lord made to this reasonable inquiry? For surely it is the duty of every christian to pay a very solemn regard to the determination of Christ himself.—*And he (viz. Christ) said unto them, when ye pray, say, Our Father, who art in heaven; &c. (v. 2.)* This is exactly agreeable to the precept he gave in his sermon on the mount; *after this manner pray ye: Our Father, who art in heaven, &c. (Mark vi. 9.)* It appears then, that our Lord has plainly commanded all his disciples to worship the one God and Father of all, without any mention of himself, or of the holy spirit of God, as objects of worship.

ATHANASIAN. Your producing the lord's prayer is, I think, unnecessary, as all christians are uniformly agreed in it; and this prayer frequently occurs in every part of our public service.

UNITARIAN. But it is proper to begin with a point universally agreed upon, in order to proceed in a regular manner, to the examination of those points wherein we differ. Though the lord's prayer is so familiar to you, by frequent use, yet it is very possible that you, and thousands of others, might not have attended to the consequences, naturally arising from this divine and comprehensive prayer.

In the next place, I recommend to your serious consideration, part of a discourse our lord delivered to his disciples, just before he was going to suffer a
painful

painful and scandalous death.—*In that day ye shall ask me nothing: Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name. At that day ye shall ask in my name.* (John xv. 23, 24, 26).

Be pleased to take particular notice, that our lord hath, in these declarations, plainly set forth the true christian form of worship, which is no other than to worship the one God and Father of all, in the name, and as the disciples, of Jesus Christ.

But here I must earnestly desire you to consider, what foundation there is for the worship of Jesus Christ, or the holy spirit of God, or three persons in one God. 'Tis impossible for the art of man to find it out, in these plain declarations of our lord, when he was professedly speaking of the duty of his disciples, with regard to the true object of religious worship.

ATHANASIAN. I freely grant you that the church-worship does not appear in this discourse of Christ. But does he not promise his disciples to send the holy spirit to guide them into all truth? From whence it is not improbable that some particulars were to be revealed to them after the descent of the holy spirit, which our lord did not think proper to communicate to them in person; so that if the church-worship be rightly deduced from the declarations of the inspired apostles, it will yet stand upon a scripture-foundation.

UNITARIAN. Let us, for the present, confine our argument to our lord's last discourse to his disciples. If the true character of God be, a Being consisting of three co-equal persons, and it be our duty to worship him under this character, is it possible to imagine, that our Lord should take no notice of such an essential part of our religious service? As no such worship can be deduced from this, or any other discourse of our lord, it must certainly be given up, as false and unscriptural, unless the apostles, after the descent of the holy spirit, have made it our express duty, by clear precepts and example.

But the matter of fact is demonstrated, even to the eye-sight, that the apostles offered up their usual and stated devotions to God only, through Jesus Christ. *They lift up their voice to God, saying, Lord, thou art God,—grant that—wonders may be done by the name of thy holy servant Jesus.* (Acts iv. 24, 30.) *Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory, through our lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor. xv. 57.) The precepts relating to worship, in the epistles, are to this effect—*Whatsoever ye do, in word or deed, do all in the name of the lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, and the Father by him.* (Coloss. iii. 17.) In the review of all the forms of worship in the new Testament, will appear demonstrative evidence that the worship of Christ, and the holy spirit, is no where warranted by the practice or precepts of the apostles : and so gross and absurd is the
 worship

worship of three persons and one God, that they have not left us the most distant intimation of any such religious practice; which you will readily perceive, when you have carefully examined all their declarations relating to the duty of worship. If it had been the will of God, that the disciples of Christ should have worshipped one God, under the character of three persons, it would have been as plainly set forth in the new Testament, as it is in the liturgy of the church of England: and consequently, the athanasian forms of worship must appear, to all sincere Bereans, false and unscriptural, as being destitute of all support from the directions of Christ and his apostles.

ATHANASIAN. But surely the great power and authority of Christ, who is so frequently joined together with the Father, as also the high offices which the holy spirit sustains; and both of them being sometimes mentioned, together with the Father, as concerned in the great work of our salvation, afford good grounds for the direct invocation of them in prayer or praise; particularly, as we are commanded to be baptized into the name of the son and holy spirit, as well as of the Father. (Mat. xxviii. 19.) And the apostolical benediction (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) seems to imply worship to the son and holy spirit.

UNITARIAN. That the son is employed by God in very high offices for the salvation of mankind, every christian must readily grant, with joy and gratitude: and the promised assistance of the holy

spirit is also deserving of our thankfulness. As almighty God empowered Christ to preach and make known the terms of salvation to the world ; so after he had compleated the gracious work assigned him, he received a commission to send down the holy spirit upon the apostles, to enable them to propagate the gospel through the world : the comfortable assistance of the same holy spirit of God, (that is, his guidance and protection) is likewise promised to all sincere christians in the discharge of their most difficult duties. Upon this account, the disciples of Christ are commanded to be baptized into the name of the son and holy spirit, as well as of the Father. To be baptized into the name of the holy spirit, or into the belief of the extraordinary guidance and direction of the holy spirit, which was given to the apostles, cannot be of the like import, with addressing ourselves to the same in prayer and praise. When this famous text in Matthew's gospel is cited, the words immediately foregoing should always be added, as being necessary to complete the sense : *all power, (that is, all power relating to the gospel-dispensation,) is given unto me in heaven, and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the son, and of the holy spirit : (Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.)* and consequently, the Father is mentioned as the giver of that power, the son as the person to whom that power is given, and the holy spirit, as the blessing of God, accompanying our endeavours, and the
 effectual

effectual means of our supporting our christian warfare. This power, of which Christ speaks, is that which he, in other words, calls the holy spirit; and, therefore, the Father is mentioned as the giver of that power, and the son as the person to whom it is given. This seems to be the true scriptural account of this passage, about which there have been so many angry disputes, but concerning which you, and every one, must judge for himself.

The other text you mention, (2 Cor. xiii. 14.) is no more than a solemn wish of the apostle Paul, that the favour of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the holy spirit, or joint partaking in the divine assistance, might be and continue with the Corinthians. But I refer you to every thing relating to this text, fairly discussed in the APPEALS before mentioned.

As to any doxology, or the ascribing of glory to the person of the holy spirit, it is not even pretended, by learned men, that one instance of it can be produced from scripture. The new Testament lies open before you, and you may see with your own eyes, whether the common church-doxology be there or not,—*Glory be to the Father, and to the son, and to the holy ghost.* The scripture-doxologies are to this effect: *Glory to God through Jesus Christ.—Blessing, &c. be unto him that sitteth upon the throne,* (viz. the one supreme God) *and unto the lamb,* (that is, God's holy and innocent creature, and great instrument employed

by him, for the salvation of mankind,) *for ever and ever.* (Rom. xvi. 27. Rev. v. 13.)

Again ; with respect to the worship of Father, son, and holy spirit, as being one God, it is a notorious fact, not to be overthrown, by all the subtle inventions of learned men through the whole christian world, that this form of worship is so far from being commanded, or authorised by the sacred writers, that the worship required in the scriptures is absolutely inconsistent with it ; the one supreme God, who is generally described by the character of Father, being constantly set forth, as the only object to whom all religious invocation should be directed. Nothing is more easy than for you, or for any other common christian, to determine this plain question, whether the worship of three persons and one God, be in the new Testament, which you have in your hands, or whether it be not.

ATHANASIAN. To speak impartially, your observations upon this article of religious worship appear to me of considerable weight. If the matter of fact be as you have represented it, (and you very fairly refer me to the scripture itself, for my complete satisfaction,) I shall be obliged to give up the athanasian worship, as what cannot be defended by the word of God. 

But as worship is paid to Christ in scripture, and glory is expressly ascribed to him, is not this a very strong

strong and conclusive argument, that Christ is equally divine, or one God, with the Father?

UNITARIAN. My good friend, as you begin to see some light and evidence, which you had not observed before, I shall take a particular pleasure in employing my best endeavours to give you every possible satisfaction upon this important article of religious worship. The argument usually urged, by learned men, to prove Christ's supreme divinity, is clearly and solidly answered, by the plain scripture account of the honour and worship which is to be paid to him, and which surely will be found to be very short of *divine* worship. From scripture then we learn, that we must *honour the son, because the Father hath committed all judgment unto him*; (John v. 22. 23.) that we must *confess Christ to be lord, to the glory of God the Father*, i. e. acknowledge his high authority from God. (Philip. ii. 10. 11.)

More particularly in the Revelation, (ch. v.) where in an heavenly vision exhibited before the apostle John, our lord is emblematically described as a lamb, receiving honours and worship. Be pleased, however, to observe, that the ground of these honours and worship, was not, his being God, equal to the Father; was not, because he was employed by God as an inferior instrument in the creation of the world; but because he was thought worthy to receive this tribute of blessing and praise, as a reward for his faithful attachment to the cause of God, and his
willing

willing sufferings in confirming the truth of the gospel, for the benefit of mankind. But this worship paid to this lamb that was slain, (*i. e.* to a creature, and to a mortal creature, capable of dying,) cannot be *divine* worship ; the worship to be paid to God, cannot be construed into an invocation of the holy Jesus in prayer ; especially when there is no command in the scriptures for it, given by Christ himself, or, by almighty God : but it must be, that worship, reverence, and respect which we pay to fellow-creatures, our superiors in worth and excellence ; worship proportionate to the highly virtuous and pious character of the blessed Jesus, and his benevolence towards us, whenever we think or speak of him ; but not to make him almighty God by praying to him.

ATHANASIAN. My good friend, it does not become a sincere christian to withstand the evidence you have, I think, fairly produced from the word of God. The objection I made, is satisfactorily answered, more especially that in the fifth chapter of the Revelation ; and I really wonder at myself, and many others, who have not been so convinced before.

UNITARIAN. My dear christian friend, we ought to make great allowances for each other's infirmities, mistakes, and prejudices, naturally arising from various causes. Nothing is more common in human life, than even for thinking persons to receive information about things seemingly plain and obvious, and which may have escaped their notice. But the
readiness

readiness you shew to submit to evidence, when fairly laid before you, upon religious subjects, proceeds from an excellent temper of mind, which naturally qualifies you to receive the truth, as it is in Jesus. As you freely grant that the athanasian forms of worship must be given up, if the fact be, as I have stated it, I am willing to put the whole cause upon this short and important issue. If, upon inquiry, you can point out, by any one plain instance or precept in scripture, that it is the duty of christians to worship Christ and the holy spirit, as being each of them God : and three persons as one God, in prayer, or praise : I shall then freely acknowledge myself to be in a religious error, and shall think myself obliged to return to the church-worship, which I have carefully avoided since the time of my conviction. On the other hand, if you cannot point out any such worship, in the scriptures, you will judge yourself obliged, by your own confession, to adhere to scripture-forms of worship, notwithstanding the authority of even wise and learned men ; it being an express duty required of Christ's disciples, to *obey God rather than men*.

Let it be observed, that this argument, drawn from the consideration of the term " worship," is adapted to all capacities, and absolutely demolishes the athanasian doctrine, with respect to the worship of the holy spirit ; it being impossible to conceive that this holy spirit, who is supposed by the athanasians to be of equal dignity with God, the Father, should never
have

have one prayer directed to him, should have no glory ascribed to him in the writings of the apostles, from whom alone we can receive a faithful account of the christian dispensation.

Again; how is it possible to imagine that it was the design of the sacred writers, to fix, in the mind of christians, the belief of Father, son, and holy spirit being three persons and one God, as they have left us no example of any sort of worship directed to three persons and one God? If this had been a fundamental doctrine of the gospel, we should not only have had it plainly and frequently expressed, but likewise solemn prayers and praises would have been addressed to God, under the character of three co-equal persons; otherwise, the apostles themselves have left us in the dark with regard to an essential part of christian worship. Can it enter into the heart of any serious christian to believe in earnest, that it is necessary to salvation to conceive of God, as a being consisting of three persons, (as is profanely and absurdly maintained in the athanasian creed, which ought to be banished from the service of all christian societies) when the apostles themselves have never made it the duty of christians to offer up prayers and praises to God, under the athanasian character: but in all the examples of worship recorded in scripture, almighty God is always addressed, as one supreme intelligent agent, one God and Father of all? This essential failure in the athanasian cause has, I find,
driven

driven some of its learned defenders into this palpable absurdity, that when we pray to God, under the character of Father, the word *Father* denotes Father, son, and holy spirit ; which demonstrates the falsehood of the cause they are labouring to support : it being extremely clear from hence, that they cannot produce one instance of worship to three persons and one God. Otherwise, men of sense and learning would not have recourse to such an expedient, as hath no other tendency, than to turn the scripture into ridicule, and expose it to the scoffs of profane and sceptical men.

ATHANASIAN. I freely allow the grand importance of this plain matter of fact, drawn from the article of religious worship. But I would just take notice of a text, that seems to imply the doctrine of a trinity in unity, though no instance of worship paid to such a being appears in scripture. *There are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the word, and the spirit ; and these three are one.* (1 John v. 7.)

UNITARIAN. Ever since I became acquainted with this subject, it has been matter of serious lamentation to me, that common christians have been so much imposed upon by the sound of this famous text, which, if written by the apostle John, is nothing to the purpose, the sense of it being evidently this ; that these three are one, as agreeing in the same testimony. But it is a matter of fact, well known to the learned, that it is a spurious, interpolated text,
and

and has been given up, as such, by some athanasian writers; and consequently, this text ought not to be read in churches, as the word of God. You may see every thing relating to it faithfully represented, in Sir Isaac Newton's *Letter to Mr. Le Clerc*; in the *Defence* of the Appeal to Common Sense, printed in octavo, 1760, p. 431; and in Mr. Lindsey's *Apology*, p. 98.

ATHANASIAN. Without entering into the merits of this question, for which I am not qualified; if some learned professors of the trinity in unity have given up this text, as not written by the apostle John*, it must be allowed that no stress should be laid

* Athanasius himself never referred to this text. (Trin. Controversy reviewed, p. 447.) Erasmus insisted that it was in no ancient manuscripts, and had never been cited by those fathers, who had disputed the most against the arians, as Athanasius, Cyril, and Hilary, (Jortin's Life of Erasmus, v. 1. p. 345) Luther and Bullinger omitted it in their german translations of the bible. (Lindsey's Apology p. 99.) Even " in the first english
" bibles after the reformation, in the time of Henry
" viii. and Edward vi. it was printed in a different cha-
" racter, to signify its being wanting in the original,
" which distinction came afterwards to be neglected." (Clarke's Script. Doct. 3d edit. p. 232.) Dr. Wall says,
" This verse is in no greek manuscript, nor was in the
" bibles of the ancient christians; nor ever made use
" of by them in their disputes with the arians. Mill
has

laid upon so controverted a passage. But after all the concessions I have made, regarding the article of worship, are there not, in scripture, several high titles

“ has so defended it, that he who thought it genuine before, will now conclude it to be interpolated by “ some latin scribe first.” (Trin. controversy reviewed, p. 448.) Dr. Bentley in his famous lecture at Cambridge, when he stood candidate for the chair of regius professor of divinity, intirely gave up this text, and publicly proved it to be spurious. (Hist. Memoirs of Dr. Clarke, p. 101.) Dr. Waterland, on being asked whether Dr. Bentley’s arguments did not convince him, replied,—“ No, for he was convinced before.” Nor does the doctor, I think, ever quote that text as genuine in any of his writings. Which, says Whiston, in so zealous and warm a trinitarian, deserves to be taken notice of as a singular instance of honesty and impartiality, (ibid. and Sykes’s Connexion, p. 271.) Dr. Sykes “ Owns that he vehemently suspects it.” (External peace of the church, p. 18.) and elsewhere, that “ this text is proved spurious, if it be possible for “ any passage to be proved so.” (Modest plea, p. 15.) “ Dr. Jortin calls it “ A spurious text which is still “ maintained in bold defiance to the fullest and “ clearest evidence against it.” (Remarks on E. H. V. iii. p. 100.) Dr. Randolph “ has not quoted it in his “ vindication of the doctrine of the trinity, in answer to “ the essay on spirit, though he has collected the most “ considerable texts that are usually alledged to prove

titles and attributes ascribed to the son and holy spirit, which surely have a tendency to induce christians to think them equally divine with the Father?

UNITARIAN. I am persuaded, that if a person who had never heard of the athanasian doctrine and worship, was to read the new Testament*, he would be

“ the athanasian doctrine,” (Trin. Controversy reviewed, p. 448.)

Notwithstanding these, and a great number of other testimonies, Mr. Travis has addressed several letters to Mr. Gibbon, in defence of the authenticity of this text, so lately as 1784.—He has however been very properly and ably reproved in some remarks published in “ Commentaries and Essays.” v. i. p. 511—539. From whence we may finally conclude, in the words of Dr. Jortin, that “ At present, this passage and all “ that relates to it, hath been so fully discussed, that “ none, except stubborn and perverse people, pretend “ to deny that the *heavenly witnesses* are an interpolation.” (Life of Erasmus, v. ii. p. 102.)

Mr. Porson, fellow of Trinity college, Cambridge, has finally proved the spuriousness of this text, without leaving any probability of any further vindication or reply, in his late very learned and very satisfactory *Letters to Mr. Archdeacon Travis, in answer to his defence of the three heavenly witnesses*, 8vo. 1790.

* When Job Ben Solomon, the African prince, (who was master of the Arabic, and had acquired a competent knowledge

be surprised to find that such a doctrine and worship ever prevailed in the christian world. But, (to give a direct answer to your objection, drawn from the high titles and attributes ascribed to the son and holy spirit)

C 2

spirit)

knowledge of the English language) was in England. about fifty years ago, and was asked, after reading the new Testament, if he found three Gods there: he replied, " No, NO! ONE GREAT GOD, ONE GREAT " GOOD GOD."

It is also observed, by one who lived several years familiarly with the Indians of North America, " The " great article that they stick most at, is this, they " exclaim against the supposition, that the divine word " was shut up for nine months in the womb of a " woman: and say, that it is a thing unheard of, " that for the expiation of Adam's sin, God should " put God to death to satisfy himself: or that the " peace of the world should be brought about by the " incarnation of God, and his shameful death.—They " affirm that reason ought not to be controled by any " law, or put under a necessity of approving what it " does not comprehend; and, in fine, that what *we* " call an article of faith, is an intoxicating potion to " make reason reel and stagger out of its way; for as " much as the pretended faith may support lies, as " well as truth, if we understand by it a readiness to " believe, without diving to the bottom of things." La Honton's New Voyage to North America, v. ii. cited in Cardale's True Doctrine of the N.T. 2d. edit. p. 360.

spirit) it is no wonder that great things are ascribed to Christ, and to the operation of the spirit or power of God, since they are frequently concerned in, or connected with, the grand work of man's salvation. But, the sacred writers have taken all imaginable care to secure the supremacy of the one God and Father of all, when they speak in the highest strain of the one mediator, the man Christ Jesus, and the holy spirit the comforter. With respect to the title of *God*, in some few passages ascribed to our blessed lord, it is extremely plain, from the old and new Testament, that such title is sometimes used in an inferior sense; Moses, magistrates and angels being stiled gods, consistently with the acknowledgment of the supreme God; and Christ himself, in his answer to the jews, when they charged him with blasphemy, expressly contends for the use of the word *God* in an inferior sense. (John x. 34—36.) But, it is sufficient for my present purpose, to observe in general, that when this, and other high titles and attributes ascribed to Christ, (for the holy spirit is never expressly stiled God, or lord,) are collected together, and presented to the reader with all possible advantage, which is frequently done by athanasian writers; our lord himself, and his apostles, have assured us, in the most solemn manner, that he, (viz. Christ) RECEIVED his being, high titles, and attributes from God the Father; that God advanced him to high dignity and honour, upon account of his perfect righteousness,

righteousness, and obedience unto death: (see Philip. ii. 8, 9, &c.) and that the whole redounds to the glory of God, the Father.

This plain and solemn account effectually overthrows the argument usually drawn from the most pompous recital of our lord's high titles and attributes: it being absolutely impossible that the supreme God should have any thing *given* him by any being whatever. For, according to the unanswerable declaration of the apostle Paul; *Who hath first GIVEN to him (viz. God,) and it shall be recompensed to him? For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory for ever.* (Rom. ii. 35, 36.) From whence it follows, with demonstrative evidence, that Christ, who was *given* by almighty God, who *received his all from God*, is a person, in his most exalted state, inferior to the one supreme God and Father of all. And the argument holds still stronger with regard to the holy spirit; which was bestowed and sent from heaven, according to Christ's promise, and the commission he had received from his God and Father, to furnish the apostles with extraordinary gifts, and to render them qualified for their important work.

Add to this, that there are, in the new Testament, about *two hundred and forty* passages, wherein Christ is declared to be inferior to almighty God. The expressions relating to this point are plain and clear, incapable of any other sense, without violence and

distortion. On the other hand, there is only the found of *one* text, which seems to set forth Christ's equality with the Father, and the found is intirely owing to a false translation; (viz. Philip. ii. 6.) *Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God*; the words should be rendered thus, *who being in the form of God, (i. e. endowed with divine powers) was not eagerly desirous to be like unto God*; (i. e. to display those powers.) Be pleased to read the eleventh verse, and then determine, by the principles of common sense, whether a person equal to the supreme God, can be raised to higher dignity than he was before?

Again; what demonstrates the falsehood of the athanasian doctrine, beyond a possibility of doubt is, that there are about *forty* passages, wherein the three persons of the trinity are mentioned together, who are sometimes stiled the *Father, son, and holy spirit*; or, *the Father, the son, and the spirit*;—*the living God, Christ, the spirit*; *God, the son of God, the holy spirit*;—*God, the lord, the spirit*: but not one passage appears, where the Father, the son, and the holy spirit, are said to be the one God, as determined by the athanasian creed. On the other hand, the Father is called *God, the living God*, and sometimes *the one God*, expressly distinguished from the son and holy spirit. You must, in this place, either give up the plain declarations of scripture, or the athanasian doctrine, they being, when fairly compared

pared together, absolutely inconsistent with each other.

I will conclude with a plain scripture fact, relating to the character of the supreme God. There are in the new Testament *four hundred and forty one* passages, wherein God, the Father, is stiled *the one*, or *only God*, or *God* absolutely by way of eminence and supremacy; or God with some peculiar high titles, epithets, or attributes. Upon the whole, the sacred writers have taken all imaginable care to maintain the supremacy of the *one God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all*; it proceeding entirely from his boundless love and mercy, that our lord was appointed to teach his mind and will to mankind, and that he bestowed his spirit, or extraordinary power, upon him for that purpose.

ATHANASIAN. I heartily thank you, my good friend, for the pains you have taken to set me right on this important point. I cannot help acknowledging that you proceed in a rational way, and that your arguments seem justly drawn from scripture, interpreted by reason. If there be such a number of texts in the new Testament, clearly setting forth the sense you have contended for, under the three last heads of your discourse, the athanasian cause is certainly demolished. Surely it must have cost you a vast deal of time and labour to collect such a number of texts, and range them in proper order.

I am

I am determined to give the new Testament a serious review, and to take particular notice of all those passages, that refer to God the father, the son, and the holy spirit. And if upon such impartial examination, as I shall be able to make, I find your facts truly represented, and your reasoning conclusive, I shall think it my duty to profess my conviction, though it should contradict the practice and sentiments of wise and learned men, whose authority, I own, has hitherto had too much influence on my mind.

UNITARIAN. My dear christian friend, your resolution is wise and good. Nothing is of greater consequence, in the grand business of religion, than that every person, to whom God has given common sense and reason, should judge and determine for himself, in all points, wherein his duty is concerned. I have the particular satisfaction to reflect, that the more carefully you examine the subject of our debate, the stronger conviction you will receive of the truth of the scripture facts, I have faithfully set forth. And, as to the reasoning part, it is certainly founded on the principles of common sense, which is the best method of interpreting scripture; or for what end was our reason given to us? or how can it be better employed, than in exploring the revelation of God?

With respect to the authority of wise and learned men, and the argument drawn from the established liturgy;

liturgy; I find, upon inquiry, that many wise, learned, and good men; and some, whose judgment, upon any question, is of more value than that of thousands, have embraced the unitarian doctrine: and what deserves particular notice, some of them, who had been educated in the usual athanasian scheme, afterwards professed the right opinion of God, and his holy worship, in opposition to their worldly interest; and even, since the reformation, suffered imprisonment, banishment, and death.

The memory of our first reformers, ought, without doubt, to be held in very high esteem, upon account of what they did and suffered, in the glorious work of freeing religion from the foul corruptions of popery: but certain it is, that they did not sufficiently examine the gross opinion of three persons in one God. They too readily took for granted, what had been settled and determined by the fathers and councils of the fourth and fifth centuries, after the time of Christ; when persons, acquainted with church-history, assure us, the unity of God, in the plain and literal sense, was first corrupted: and that a superstitious veneration of relicks, and the invocation of saints immediately followed the corruption.

To speak my mind freely, it is certainly matter of serious lamentation, that such a gross corruption in the pure religion of the holy Jesus, and which laid the foundation of the grand apostacy, has not been
long

long ago banished from the church of England; which, in the most solemn manner, professeth the scripture as the only rule of faith and practice; and, that nothing should be imposed on the consciences of men, but what is warranted by the word of God. It is well known, that this very subject was recommended to the consideration of the most eminent persons in church and state, about eighty years ago, by two very learned and very eminent divines, viz. Mr. Whiston, in his *Primitive Christianity revived*, and Dr. Clarke, in his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. The latter I procured, and was there completely furnished with all the texts relating to the doctrine of the trinity, reduced under proper heads: and how any christian can withstand the evidence arising from such a number of texts, (viz. *twelve hundred and fifty-one*,) is to me astonishing. Again; there was a particular application made to the governing powers in the justly famous *Free and Candid Disquisitions*, about forty years ago, in an humble, calm, and christian manner, in order to get the liturgy reformed, according to the standard of the scripture: but nothing has yet been attempted in that glorious cause. And, in the year 1772, application was made to parliament for relief from subscription to human articles of religious faith and doctrine: since which, several of the clergy of the established church have resigned their preferments and ministry therein, rather than continue to officiate, in the
public

public service, against their consciences; while many, many more, remain behind, groaning and oppressed by their conformity, being yet unable wholly to withdraw themselves. Notwithstanding which, the same corrupt forms are still kept up in the midst of light and knowledge; and, therefore common christians are, with the highest reason, called upon to examine, judge, determine, profess, and protest;—to disregard all public authority, when it stands in competition with the express declarations of Christ and his apostles.

We are daily praying to our heavenly Father, that *his name may be hallowed*, that is, that he may be worshipped and adored, as the supreme and only object of the highest reverence and love of all rational creatures; and yet, at the same time, we obstinately continue in such false worship as eclipses his supreme honour and glory, in express contradiction to his holy word. We are constantly interceding with almighty God, for the good estate of the catholic church, or, that the church of Christ may be universal; that it may be so guided and governed by his good spirit, that all who profess and call themselves christians, may be led into the way of truth; and, at the same time, we seem determined to hold fast important errors regarding God and his holy worship, notwithstanding the strongest and clearest light. Upon some occasions, more especially in one of the collects for Good-Friday, we earnestly
pray

pray for the conversion of jews, turks, and infidels, and at the end of the very same collect, we inconsistently keep up a religious practice, that is one of the greatest obstacles to their conversion. For it is extremely evident, by all accounts, that neither jews, nor mahometans, who are believers of one supreme God, can be converted whilst they are taught to think, that the doctrine of three persons in one God, and the worship practised in consequence of it, are essential parts of the christian religion. This can be deemed little less than a solemn mockery of the almighty, unless we employ our sincere endeavours to effect whatever we pray for; and, I am afraid, will finally demonstrate the insincerity of this church and nation, if no alterations can be obtained from the governing powers.

Since my conviction, I have been naturally led to reflect on the lamentable state of mankind, in almost all ages and countries, with respect to the knowledge of the one true God. Not a great many years after the flood, whereby the immediate power of the almighty creator was so remarkably displayed, there was a general revolt of the nations of the earth into a state of gross idolatry: upon which account, almighty God chose a particular people, for the glorious purpose of keeping up the knowledge and worship of himself; as this grand principle of all religion, though established by demonstrative evidence in the works of creation, would have been certainly lost, without

without an extraordinary revelation. And even this chosen people, the history of the old Testament faithfully informs us, frequently fell into idolatry, before the Babylonish captivity, and very seldom continued any considerable time in a steady obedience to the Lord their God. And, happy had it been for the christian world, if they themselves had never departed from the plain and fundamental article of all true religion, viz. the unity of God, so frequently inculcated in the scripture. Moses, the jewish law-giver, delivers this important truth in the most solemn manner. *Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God, is one Lord.* (Deut. vi. 4.) And our lord when he was asked by one of the scribes—*which was the first commandment of all?* confirms the same doctrine by his express authority: *Jesus answered him, the first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel! the Lord our God, is one Lord.*—(Mark xii. 28 and 29.) And that this one God, is the Father only, expressly distinguished from the son and holy spirit, is as plainly and strongly declared by Christ and his disciples as it is possible for words to set it forth. Yet, in opposition to the authority of both, who derived their commission from God, it was determined by fallible and presumptuous mortals, between four and five hundred years after Christ, that there are three supreme Gods, and, at the same time that these three supreme Gods, are one God: and whoever will not believe this gross nonsense, and impious contradiction, is doomed to

D

eternal

eternal torments*. In consequence of this absurd doctrine, it was decreed, that it is the duty of christians to worship God, under the character of three co-equal persons, without even the least colour of evidence taken from scripture. If this be not such a departure from God and his holy worship, as calls aloud for a reformation, I must despair of understanding the plainest case in matters of religion. But, whether the governing powers will regard their duty in this grand affair, or whether they will not, every particular person, who has gained right notions of God and his holy worship, is indispensibly obliged to

* The creed of the athanasian christian is very accurately described by lord Bacon, one of the wisest and greatest men this country ever produced. (See his *Works*, 4to. vol. iii. p. 129.) “ He believes,” says his lordship, “ three to be one and one to be three ; a
“ father not to be older than his son ; a son to be equal
“ with his father ; and one proceeding from both to
“ be equal to both ; as believing three persons in one
“ nature ; and two natures in one person.

“ He believes a virgin to be the mother of a son ;
“ and that very son of hers to be her maker. He be-
“ lieves *him* to have been shut up in a narrow cell,
“ whom heaven and earth could not contain. He be-
“ lieves *him* to have been born in time, who was,
“ and is from everlasting. He believes *him* to have
“ been a weak child, and carried in arms, who is al-
“ mighty ; and *him* once to have died who alone has
“ life and immortality.”

to profess and practise in exact conformity to the solemn determination of Christ and his apostles, without regarding any worldly inconveniences that may arise from the rejection of false notions and unscriptural worship*. This is an essential character of Christ's disciples, and required, as an express condition, by our lord himself. *Whoever shall be ashamed of me, and of my words, of him shall the son of man be ashamed, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels.* (Luke ix. 26.)

But, let it be always remembered, and deeply fixed in our hearts, that right notions of God, and his holy worship, were not intended to amuse our minds with empty speculations; but, to establish a rational correspondence between God and our own minds, that we may be effectually influenced to reduce to practice, the pure and holy laws of Jesus Christ. If we have gained better, and more rational sentiments of religion than we had before, we are called

D 2

upon

* For forms of public prayer for the use of unitarian christians, consult "*The Book of Common Prayer, reformed,*" used in the unitarian chapel in Essex-street, London; and Dr. Priestley's very late, and very excellent "*Forms of Prayer and other Offices, for the use of unitarian societies;* both printed for J. Johnson, No. 72, St. Paul's Church-yard. Also *Forms of prayer, for the use of a congregation of protestant dissenters* in Manchester, 1789.

upon, by still stronger obligations, to *let our light so shine before men, that they may glorify our Father, who is in heaven.* Do we see by a lively faith, the one supreme God, in his real character, as a Being of all possible perfection, more especially justice, mercy, love, goodness, and every valuable excellence that can attract a reasonable affection? We are then certainly required to love this glorious and amiable Being, with all our heart, with all our mind, and with all our strength; to prefer his favour, before every interest of this mortal state, as being really better than life itself; to raise our minds above every corrupt appetite and passion; and, to take all possible pains to adorn our lives and actions, with the excellent qualifications of piety, righteousness, charity, sobriety, patience, purity and holiness, which Christ and his apostles have solemnly inculcated, as the necessary terms and conditions of gaining eternal life. On the other hand; very severe threatenings, namely, exclusion from the kingdom of a heaven, and a state of great and lasting misery, are denounced against all wilful sinners, who continue such without sincere amendment and reformation, demonstrated by an uniform course of universal righteousness, to the end of their lives.

ATHANASIAN. My good friend, though you are very zealous in this important cause, yet your zeal is conducted by reason and knowledge. Party-zealots, in the midst of their solicitous concern to
settle

fettle opinions and religious practices, are too apt to forget, or disregard the christian obligations to universal charity and holiness of life. I am really convinced, that what you have said, highly deserves the serious consideration of all those who profess themselves disciples of Jesus Christ, and, in earnest, believe the divine authority of the holy scriptures. I hope to make a proper use of this religious conference, and to act such a part, in consequence of it, as will be accepted at that solemn time, when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.

UNITARIAN. I sincerely rejoice, my dear christian friend, that you are become a Berean, an inquirer for yourself, and resolved to search the scripture with an unprejudiced mind; which excellent temper will, I make no doubt, lead you to a rational satisfaction upon this, and other religious subjects. And may the blessings of the one supreme God, and Father of all, attend your sincere disquisitions.

A SECOND

FRIENDLY DIALOGUE

BETWEEN

EUGENIUS AND THEOPHILUS.

EUGENIUS. It is now, my dear friend, some few years since we held that conference which was occasioned by your disrespectful behaviour, as I then conceived of it, during some parts of the public service of the established church. The good temper which we preserved in that conversation, and the earnest desire after truth, which equally prevailed in both of us, have been the occasion, since that time, of many pleasing reflections. And as I shall, I trust, never cease to interest myself in the happiness of my fellow-creatures; I will never cease to pray to almighty God, that the same love of truth, and the same candid and charitable temper, may universally prevail among all the different denominations of christians; being fully persuaded that until we can agree to entertain different opinions upon religious subjects, with perfect harmony and love, we shall never discover the truth, or be capable of receiving it.

THEOPHILUS.

THEOPHILUS. These sentiments, with which our conversation is now renewed, and which have preserved the recollection of our former conference with so much pleasure in your memory, are no less the sentiments of my heart, than they are of yours. My affection for you, as my friend, never suffered the least diminution on account of the differences of opinion which, at any time subsisted between us. The progress of our judgment is gradual; and the measure of our conviction cannot be foreknown by us. Serious inquiry into serious subjects, is our duty; but the result of such inquiries is not within our command.

EUGENIUS. The controversy in which we were before engaged, began in the different opinions we entertained of the person of Christ. The system which I supported was very properly discriminated by the name of "athanasian," by which appellation I was then distinguished. Our debate, as you well know, concluded, on my part, with some very ample concessions respecting the obligation and necessity of religious inquiry, and with my hearty and voluntary promise to read, think, and determine for myself. Thus far, your arguments had all the effect you desired; for till that time, from early prejudice, from a blind deference to the judgment of many good and learned men, from a false reverence for the doctrines established by the laws of my country, and from an unmanly fear of exercising
my

my reason in the scriptures of revelation, I had committed my religious faith, not only to the keeping, but to the disposal of others; I was wont to resolve every doubt by human authority, and was most reluctant to suffer either others or myself to traverse those regions of liberty, which are discovered in the gospel, and presented to our view and contemplation; wherein reason is the guide, and private judgment, uncontrouled, the sole arbiter of opinion.

THEOPHILUS. Your ready conviction, and generous avowal of it, do equal honour to your head and heart; and bespeak you to be all that I wish to see you. Names are indifferent, except for the purpose of distinguishing the parties to whom they are given. That of "unitarian," however, continues to belong to me with the same propriety as heretofore; but in accommodation to the present turn of our discourse, in consequence of the change in your mind, I have assumed the name of Theophilus, wishing to be approved no less the friend of God, than a believer in his unity, and a worshipper of him, in spirit and in truth.

Believe me, my friend, I am most solicitous that mankind should inquire into the scriptures, and judge for themselves; for in the maintenance and exercise of this liberty alone will they ever be able to arrive at the truth. Particular doctrines are of inferior consequence; but these will come nearer the truth, in proportion as men inquire and judge
for

for themselves, and profess their respective opinions with more charity for those who differ from them. All restraint upon that liberty, wherewith Christ hath made us free, precludes the admission of that light and information which he came to reveal: free inquiry opens the only accessible road to the true and saving knowledge of our bibles.

EUGENIUS. This doctrine I am now ready to admit in its full extent. I was convinced by you, at our last interview, and have since availed myself of that examination of the scriptures which such conviction presumes, and ought to oblige us to pursue. Before that time, though I always read my bible with the highest reverence for its authority, and with that seriousness which its importance deserves, I will frankly confess that I read it under that cloud of prejudice, that gloomy distrust of my own understanding, and that abject submission to the opinions of others, as to derive less information from its sacred pages, than from many other books, although they were intended to make us wise unto salvation, and were written *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

THEOPHILUS. As the doctrine of implicit faith in the judgment of other men, or in the decisions of councils and synods, is the disgrace of the papal, so it remains the still greater reproach of the protestant church. It is, at once, the hot-bed and the nursery of error. Religion is a personal concern;
and

and I cannot sufficiently applaud your discernment and spirit, since you assume the denomination of a "protestant," in making and maintaining that consistent protest against all authority of man in the great affairs of religion, which can alone justify the reformation; and that in consequence thereof you are finally resolved to be directed by your own improved understanding and judgment.

EUGENIUS. I am not less sensible of the satisfaction which I derive from the exercise of the liberty I have assumed, than I am convinced of the right that appertains to every reasonable creature of God.

THEOPHILUS. The right which you have claimed, and which you have justly represented as too valuable to be suffered to lie dormant; or, rather, which you cannot permit to be vested in an empty assumption of your freedom to examine for yourself, without great criminality; has probably carried you somewhat nearer to the verge of, what churchman may style, "heretical pravity," than when we last parted.

EUGENIUS. I know not how to give a decisive answer to your question, and I wish not to make you an equivocal one. Thus far I have certainly advanced: I have improved and extended my charitable sentiments of others, and have seen occasion to doubt of many things, which I had considered as true, upon the venerable authority of the church.

THEOPHILUS.

THEOPHILUS. The change of our sentiments upon particular points, naturally leads us to the extension of our charity; for when we find that the revolutions in our own minds require indulgence and forbearance, we are more readily disposed to allow to others that liberty which we find so essential to our own happiness. In the progression from error to truth, there are many gradations; and the advancement being infinite, who shall say to the other, "thus far shalt thou proceed, and no farther."

EUGENIUS. I apprehend that you are now disposed to consider my confession, as evidence of a greater progress than I have really made. Excuse me; the very phrase, "confession," is objectionable, and offensive; and has no business in the church of Christ,—except in the qualified sense, you will here understand me to use it, in this our friendly conversation.

THEOPHILUS. You have, it seems, made such proficiency in the spirit of protestantism, as to find out that words, innocent in themselves, have been made the engines of much mischief in the christian world. But, all pleasantry apart, I may, I think, now inquire whether you have not been seriously offended, in the course of the free exercise of your own judgment in the study of the scriptures, at the dogmatical air with which most christian churches have decided upon matters of faith and doctrine; and

and whether, among these, it has never occurred to you that the church of England has partaken much of the same spirit, and shared largely in the same practice; and thereby contributed, notwithstanding her protestant professions, to scandalize the purity of the gospel.

EUGENIUS. The conduct of the church of England, I do conceive to be reprehensible in several respects. Some of the doctrines she maintains, I consider as unscriptural; and the imposition of them upon the consciences of her ministers, I think inconsistent with the principles of the protestant reformation. But she is countenanced, in both these respects, by the conduct of all the other reformed churches. Her doctrines were the doctrines of the reformers, in whom we make much boast; and as to the imposition of certain articles of faith, they are chiefly confined to ministers, and graduates of the two universities, and affect not the people at large. And in the expunging of particular doctrines out of her formulas, there might be so little agreement among those who are dissatisfied with them, that I feel some reluctance to hazard the experiment of another reformation.

THEOPHILUS. There is much candour and ingenuousness in your observations; and your own natural forbearing temper, corresponds with them. Without intending any depreciation of these excellent qualities, I cannot but think that they may

E

be

be carried into a criminal lethargy or timidity. They are qualities, which, if indulged with ease and supineness, may become hurtful; but, if brought forward into action, will greatly contribute to the happiness of mankind; and will appear particularly amiable, and eminently useful in theological controversy.

You will, therefore, excuse me, if, with the same temper of mind, I should vindicate the demands which truth makes upon every inquisitive mind; and insist that there lies an obligation upon every man to take her by the hand, and to accompany her wheresoever she shall lead him. In this sentiment, I apprehend that the present peace of mind and future happiness of my fellow christians are most essentially served; and that without a cool and dispassionate, but inflexible, adherence to truth and integrity in all the public (religious, civil, and social) intercourses of human life, men become highly blameable before God, and fail to serve their generation, and that of their children after them, in their best and most valuable interests.

EUGENIUS. My affection for truth would, I trust, support me under any persecution in her service. But, as we may disagree in the estimate we may form, and the necessity we may see of pursuing her, in certain cases; let us proceed to discuss a question which cannot but be interesting, and may be useful to us both.

THEOPHILUS.

THEOPHILUS. I will most readily accept your challenge; and examine the obligation of truth, as it affects religious opinions and the public profession of them, which is the subject more particularly before us, and which will immediately apply to the situation in which we both stand.

You have acknowledged that "the church of England maintains some doctrines which you consider as unscriptural." It must, therefore, follow, that in your opinion she ought to reform herself in these respects. The governors of the church ought most certainly to enter on this good work, from time to time, as occasion is found to require. But it has been the practice not only of the English church, but of all established churches, to protract the work of reformation. Whether from an unwillingness to confess themselves in an error, or from any fear of the loss of the lucrative endowments which are appendant to established opinions, I cannot say, but it is a fact, that they have been so invariably averse to reformation, that they have ever most tenaciously retained their respective systems, as long as they could; and indeed have seldom, if ever, been driven out of them, but by civil commotions, or by some cause originally foreign, and seemingly inadequate to such an effect.

But further; the very claim of a right to establish human formularies of religious faith and doctrine, is so directly contrary to the design and spirit of the

gospel, that it is astonishing that men could ever dare thus to arrogate to themselves that power, to which they had no right; and it is still more astonishing that mankind have permitted such a gross usurpation of their dearest and most valuable privilege. But what intolerant men have imposed, indolent and wordly-minded men have submitted to.

It is even yet more wonderful, that when the papal authority was expelled from these kingdoms, and several of the doctrines of the church of Rome were disowned and rejected, as burdens too grievous to be borne, the reformers only transplanted that authority from papal into regal hands; and all those doctrines which were admitted by the principal actors in that scene (themselves involved in the darkness and superstition of their age) were retained in our reformed church. While nothing seems more plain to the humblest capacity, than that the same arguments which applied to the power of the church of Rome, would apply to the same power in the church of England, or in any other church. It is equally obvious, that if there remained any right in the protestant community to impose one opinion, there existed the same right to impose fifty, or five hundred.

EUGENIUS. You do not, surely, mean to insinuate that the spirit of the church of England is as intolerant as that of the church of Rome; or that

that the gross doctrines of the latter are not infinitely more objectionable than those of the former.

THEOPHILUS. I not only mean to insinuate, but to insist and prove, that the character of intolerance (which is the marked character of Antichrist) is not confined to papal Rome, but transferred into every church, which lords it over God's heritage, and teaches for doctrines the commandments of men. I decline the use of all hard names: but while the argument applies with equal force against the claims and practice of all churches, I do not think it consistent with justice, to appropriate it to one church, only because I shall be joined in such appropriation by another: it ought to be applied to all churches alike, which shall alike remain so far unreformed as to fall within its reach.

EUGENIUS. This must be granted to be fair reasoning; and, as we are told that "many antichrists shall arise," it will deserve the most serious attention of every society of christians, by whatever name they may be pleased to distinguish themselves, to take especial care that they come not under that description, or suffer wreck upon that rock which has been so fatal to their brethren. As protestants pretend not only to have discovered, but to be directed by, the light and liberty of the gospel, which lay hid and concealed under the corruptions of popery, through a long night of darkness and ignorance; and, in consequence of that discovery, to have publicly protested

against the abominations and the intolerance of the church of Rome, it is certainly more blameable in them, and directly subversive of the foundation principles of their own cause, to assume to themselves that authority which they do not allow to others.

THEOPHILUS. It was this inconsistent behaviour of the protestants which gave occasion, very soon after their separation from the church of Rome, to the reproachful observation of their adversaries, which was couched in the question, "Where was your religion before the time of Luther?"

The proper answer to the reflection intended by this inquiry, is, that it might be found in the bible, where it still remains; for "the bible, and the bible only, is the religion of protestants." The question has a popular cast with it; and the charge conveyed in it, can only be wiped away by an improved and more consistent conduct in protestants themselves; for while so many of the same features are discernible in both communions, they conspire to form that resemblance which we generally denominate "a family likeness."

EUGENIUS. These observations tend to prove, what I before virtually admitted, that a further reformation of the doctrines and pretensions of the established church is much wanted. But of the expedience of such a measure, I am not so fully satisfied. The spiritual governors of the church, and the civil governors of the state, are so closely leagued together,
in

in opposing every attempt towards a review and reformation of the ecclesiastical system, that any further reformation is, to say the least, an hopeless prospect, and very unlikely to happen in any time, short of the revolution of a century. Precipitation, therefore, would only protract any favorable issue to the reasonable expectation of liberal men, and expose those who were well disposed to the cause of reformation, to the indignant resentment of their superiors, without forwarding the end for which they laboured.

THEOPHILUS. The unpleasant appearances which are distinguishable in the ecclesiastical hemisphere, seem to determine you to a patience acquiescence under the impositions of power; nor does your despondency find any relief, but in the very distant hope of further reformation, when you are gone to rest. But a conviction of the great importance and of the righteousness of such a cause, should not be cramped by considerations of merely imaginary expediency, conceived only through despair, and calculated to cloud the dawning of that future day, when the gospel of Christ shall be offered to the world, pure, and without human mixture or alloy. We are, indeed, necessarily affected by the wretched policy of the powers which bear rule in this world, but we should not be accessory to their delinquency, or partners in their guilt, by silently suffering the multiplied grievances under which the church of
Christ

Christ is made to groan, to subsist and remain without complaint. So far as we apprehend the oracles of God to be corrupted and perverted, and the rights of christians to be despoiled; it is surely a part of our duty to God, and the best proof of our brotherly love and affection for our fellow christians, to call their sober and dispassionate attention to their own conduct, and to lay before them the sad depredations they have made upon, and the impediments they have laid in the way of, the success of the gospel. For these things we shall be answerable before the judge of all the world, if we acquit not ourselves like men, and stand not fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, according as we shall have attained the knowledge of it, and had ability and opportunity of doing good. It is our duty to follow the light and conviction we have obtained, and to hold them forth to others, that they also may be benefitted thereby, if so it shall seem good to the wise disposer of all things.

There are in the highest orders of the church, many very good and excellent men, but their very situation is unfavourable to the restoration of the knowledge of the gospel, or the admission of the rights of christians to their due extent. Those who may be well-disposed to reformation, may be afraid to meet the obloquy which would be thrown upon them for their endeavours in such a cause; like father Paul, they may not have the spirit of Luther. But I mean neither to
apologize,

apologize, nor to account for the reluctance of others to complete a measure, which appears to me to deserve and demand their utmost vigilance, assiduity, and perseverance.

This being the true state of the case with regard to the great and powerful; it becomes the more necessary for those, whose lot may be cast in inferior stations, but who sensibly see and feel the injuries done to the christian cause, to labour with increased ardour in the good work, according as their talents and respective vocations shall admit.

It has been the opinion of some very good and very eminent men, that "no effort is lost." History will convince us that a little spark has often kindled a great flame, in a good as well as in an evil work. The great revolutions of the world have, not seldom, had little beginnings. But, the most substantial encouragement of all, is one that is unconcerned in speculation, and remains, independent either of success or defeat: and that is, that every man is personally answerable for his own conduct, and whichever way the world may bestow its favors, it is the wise man's aim to seek the approbation of his God.

But, even according to human estimation of things, the minds of men should be prepared by the previous exhibition of the weight and justice of the cause of reformation, although time alone can complete it. In the course of the present century, the controversies of Clarke, Whiston and Hoadly, have greatly enlightened

lightened all orders of men : in our own time, the Confessional has collected the rays of protestant light into a focus, which nothing can resist, but the fullness of an impenetrable mind : the clerical petition called the attention of liberal laymen to the question of church authority, and reduced it to the lowest credit in the estimation of an enlightened people : the application also to parliament for a repeal of the test law, though it did not remove it from the statute book, convinced every ingenuous mind in the kingdom, that the requiring every person to receive the lord's supper, according to the rites of a particular church, previous to his acceptance of a place of civil trust, was entirely foreign to the design of the institutor, a gross prostitution of the christian ordinance, and a very insufficient security to the state.

EUGENIUS. Your argument, and the recital of these recent circumstances in the history of this country, are really almost sufficient to excite a reasonable zeal, and to encourage perseverance in the hope of a favourable issue ; which the tenacious adherence to to system, and the silent opposition of great churchmen, so much discountenance.

THEOPHILUS. I have yet another important fact in modern history, in reserve. It is not fifteen years ago, since we could not have found a place of public worship, openly conducted upon unitarian principles in our island. But now these exist in our capital, and

and in several parts of this kingdom, and of Scotland.

EUGENIUS. This is certainly more than a presumption that a better spirit prevails abroad in these our times, than in the days of our forefathers. The opening such places of public worship, and the public avowal of the same sentiments in places which had been before appropriated to the same purpose, reflect much honour on our nation, and also on the ministers and congregations concerned in them ; for it shews not only that a tolerant spirit prevails in our land, but affords an example that there are men, who, being persuaded of the proper and absolute unity of the object of divine worship, will offer up their prayers to God alone, in sincerity and truth, according to their own apprehension.

THEOPHILUS. A little time ago, you told me that you thought that the evil of imposing articles of faith was greatly diminished by being restrained to ministers, and graduates of the two english universities. This apparent limitation does in no wise reconcile me to the imposition, nor does it, as I think, much lessen the ill consequences of that unholy practice. For, if you will allow yourself to reflect a moment on the intimate connection which subsists between the people and their minister, and that what the one assents to, as the engagement of his faith, and is bound to teach, the other will be obliged to hear ; you will think both parties greatly affected by them.

them. Besides, the minister's engagement must either oblige him to teach for doctrines the commandments of men, the devices of dark and ignorant ages, or to practise all the arts of equivocation and hypocrisy, in dispensing the gospel of truth; the same engagement will also oblige the honest layman, (whom you think little concerned in this imposition,) to reject with disdain that provision of doctrine which the state hath directed, or to receive those inventions as wholesome food, which may prove deadly poison. In either case, he meets with a poor compensation for the tithe of all that he possesses.

EUGENIUS. I have always considered the laity, as equally interested with the clergy, in the right knowledge and honour of the christian faith; and for the sake of their common advantage and improvement, have sometimes wished that the shepherd might not only look well after the sheep, but that the sheep would, in their turn, direct the same attention to their shepherd. But I must own, that I was not aware that the laity were so deeply interested in the subscription of the clergy, as they now appear to be. I had omitted to recollect, that to poison the spring was to poison the stream; and that the living waters of the gospel, were, in all public and authorised administrations of them, to be drank through the unpleasant medium of human compositions. However, by that kind of fatality which oftentimes disappoints exorbitant demands, the subscriptions of the clergy have

have not this universal effect; the signature of their names is made with some mental reservations, or with a latitude of construction, that leaves them, in a great degree, at liberty; and their sermons are, pretty generally, composed on this broad foundation.

THEOPHILUS. You seem not to be apprized of the great and additional grievances that follow the exercise of this unhallowed latitude of construction, which the pressing occasion of the subscribing party has called into existence. A suspicion of notorious insincerity and prevarication is entertained of such of the clergy, as assume this latitude; a latitude, disallowed by the authority that imposes the subscription, which was, in very truth, designed, however ill it has succeeded, to "prevent diversities of opinion."

Nor do the evil consequences of clerical insincerity end here; the ministers of Christ are further suspected of disbelieving christianity itself; and between those who impose the subscription, and those who disingenuously comply with it, is divided the miserable honour of sowing, far and wide, the seeds of scepticism and unbelief, and producing that plentiful harvest of infidelity, which is the modern growth of other climes beside our own.

But now, my friend, after desiring your attention to the distressing situation of the established clergy, who have entered into stipulations and engagements, which they find inconsistent with the honest and con-

F

scientious

scientious discharge of their duty; engagements, which draw into their vortex the sad alternative—continue in your ministry self-reproached, or expose yourself to poverty and scorn; suffer me to feel and mourn for all those who are in this unhappy situation; for, as I earnestly pray for their deliverance from this more than Egyptian bondage, so I should think nothing too much to do, or to suffer, to render them substantial relief.

You will forgive me this effusion; and now permit me to turn your attention from the case of the clergy to my objections to such laymen's conformity to the public service of the church, whose private sentiments and opinions are in no sort of agreement with the doctrines of her liturgy. In pursuing this conversation, I must desire, and am persuaded, you will not refuse to deliver to me your own honest and competent judgment upon this subject.

In this question, I think you are personally much interested; for, if I mistake not, I understand that you are become an unitarian; that is, you are now fully persuaded that religious worship is due to the one only living and true God, and to none other.

EUGENIUS. You do no more than justice to my present opinion, to ascribe to me the belief in one God, and that he only is to be worshipped. My conversion to this sentiment has been the deliberate consequence of our former free and friendly intercourse, and of the attention I was thereby excited to,
and

and have since paid to this important subject. I believe, that the one almighty God created the world by his power, that he governs it by his providence, and will finally judge all mankind, and apportion happiness or misery, according as they shall have done good or evil. I believe, that he alone is the object of religious worship, and alone capable of hearing our prayers.

THEOPHILUS. Your firm belief of the divine unity, being the result of your own inquiry, I trust, you will more clearly see the rectitude of that conduct, with which, (as it appears to me,) such a persuasion ought to be attended, by one who lives under an athanasian establishment of religion. The backwardness of great churchmen, in the work of reformation, has been already observed upon: and the conformity of certain of the clergy with the established forms, which they cannot entirely approve, has been the subject of our joint concern.

In this state, therefore, of our conference, it becomes expedient to enquire, how, and by what arguments, you, who are a layman, unshackled by subscription, and beset, on neither side, by the clergyman's unhappy alternative,—how you, I say, justify your continued conformity to an athanasian form of public worship, which you cannot approve. Surely your integrity and practical love of truth are as much impeached by your voluntary compliance, as the character of any like-minded ecclesiastic: your having

made no stipulation for your liberty, nor deriving any honour or emolument from the church, leaves you, the more easily, and at much less cost, to follow the dictates of your own mind.

EUGENIUS. If I cannot wholly justify, I think I can excuse my conformity; at least, I am very willing to give you my reasons. I solicit your impartial judgment also in return, and will honestly use every faculty I have, in forming my own.

You will, in the first place, be pleased to remember, that I am only an hearer of the public service of the church, and can, therefore, assent to so much, and such parts of the prayers, as I approve; and reject such as I may judge to be contrary to the truth: this I can do, just in the same manner as I may approve part of a sermon, and reject the remainder.

THEOPHILUS. By this plausible sophistry, which you practise upon yourself, I conceive that you greatly defeat the good effects which should follow your attendance upon public worship. It is generally true of most men, (and as much so of the best of men, as of others,) that to keep the mind seriously and devoutly occupied, while offering up their hearts to God in such service, it is necessary to avoid every distraction which may draw off, or divide the attention. Now the athanasian doctrine of a trinity, occurs so very frequently in the liturgy, and is also in many places so grossly expressed, that all such passages must

must not only divert the mind by employing it in transferring the ascriptions of praise, thanksgiving, and adoration from a plurality of Gods, to the one supreme Being ; but the spirit of devotion must be disturbed and dispersed in the very adjustment of the language ; and, added to this, the very expressions themselves must be very shocking and offensive to the ear of one, who looks up to God alone, as the object of adoration, without peer or partner.

The case of prayer, which is a social act, and addressed to God, will not admit of illustration from the liberty which we very commendably exercise in hearing sermons, when the auditors may receive or reject what they hear, according as they shall be determined by the evidence and arguments produced. The cases are no way similar. The preacher delivers his illustration of a portion of the scripture, supports it by argument, draws and applies his inferences according to the best of his ability ; but these are no further conclusive upon his hearers than as they meet their judgment and consent. But, in the business of prayer, the case is far different. The mind being previously acquainted with the form of address to the throne of grace, the worshippers of God should be intirely consenting, and fully and singly employed in the prayers, and praises, and thanksgivings there expressed, in the contemplation of that Being to whom they are made, and in those aspirations which naturally accompany every act of rational and elevated devotion.

That easy compliance to which you are disposed, in this case, is, with many people, the result of indifference. It would equally excuse your going to mass in the romish communion, as to the service of the church of England; for the same reservations which you think keep you clear, in the one, from any implied consent to the doctrine of the trinity, would, in the other, acquit you of believing the doctrine of transubstantiation. Upon the principles of your argument, all integrity of heart and mind may be dispensed with, in those very services, where, of all others, they are most becoming, and in which there can be no temptation, which does not arise from indifference, or the most contemptible and ineffectual hypocrisy.

Neither is this all. Your example may be, and, probably, will be contagious; it may prove the means of continuing, and even of spreading the same disingenuous practice among others; a practice, which allows and familiarises the profession of the grossest corruptions of christian worship, and represents them as being perfectly compatible with the purest faith.

EUGENIUS. In the earnestness of your argument, you have forgotten to make any allowance for a certain unwillingness to appear particularly scrupulous, in a matter, which, though important in itself, the world is not disposed to think so highly of, as to excuse such singularity of conduct.

THEOPHILUS.

THEOPHILUS. The proper answer to this feeble apology, shall come from yourself, ask then your own heart, whether you ought to place the indulgence of any native bashfulness, or any desire to avoid that singularity, which you affect to think so formidable, in competition with the great duty of worshipping the one God and Father of all, in sincerity and truth; and of confessing before men, the doctrines of the great messenger of glad tidings. You well know on what authority we are told, that *whosoever shall confess Christ before men, him will he confess also before his Father, who is in heaven: but whosoever shall deny him, before men, him will he also deny before his Father, who is in heaven.* (Matt. x. 32, and 33.)

The prayers in which you join, in the public service of the church, are not such as you either do, or would adopt in your closet, or in your family. And the reason why you reject the use of them in private, is because you think them sinful, inasmuch as they are directed to three distinct beings or persons, instead of God alone. How then can the same conduct be innocent, when acted before the world, which is sinful in the privacy of your own house? or, as the question may be more forcibly stated, how much more reprehensible is such evil conduct before the world, where it may seduce and corrupt the integrity of others, than when confined to a more private scene?

Apply the spirit of this question to any of the
common

common transactions in life, and you will acknowledge not only the wisdom, but even the expediency of exhibiting that rectitude of principle and behaviour in our own characters, which we look for in others. Without this endeavour on our parts, we really countenance that very duplicity, which we disapprove and condemn. And, in our christian calling, we should be very careful not to give the most distant occasion of scandal to our profession; but to draw forward and to excite by our mutual example, that inflexible and intrepid integrity which adds grace to the christian character, and inspires a fortitude which looks down with indifference upon nothing, but what is not deserving of a wise man's choice or attention.

EUGENIUS. I most readily concede to you, that that service of prayer which does not honestly express the mind of the worshipper, and is therefore sinful, must be equally so whether offered in private, or in social worship. This observation had occurred to me before, and therefore I qualified my attendance by with-holding my assent to such parts of the church liturgy as I did not approve. But this expedient having involved much distraction of mind, and leaving me in a situation which held me forth as an example of countenancing, by my presence, what I did not approve in my heart; I have been occasionally disposed to forego and absent myself from all public worship, because of the irreconcilable disagreement

agreement between the tritheism of the established liturgy, which I now consider as idolatry, and the addressing all prayer to God alone, which I apprehend to be the religion of nature, and of revelation. I have, therefore, had it in contemplation to confine myself to the duty and exercise of private prayer.

THEOPHILUS. If you should persist in adopting this idea of a silent retreat from a worship, which you so greatly disapprove, by withdrawing from all social devotion, I cannot but think that you abuse the talents and opportunities afforded you, and desert the standard of the christian faith; I also think that you will again place the influence of your example in a situation, where it may do much harm.

Social worship is a very great means of edification, in a variety of ways: it calls men forth to the public avowal of their principles in the face of open day; it advances brotherly love in an inter-communion in the offices of religion; it concentrates the example of good men, and animates devotion in their neighbours; it keeps alive the principles of religion and piety, and prepares men to act a virtuous part in the scenes of active life.

Now as, upon your own plan of privacy, the reason of your secession would not be rightly, or generally known, your absence from all public worship (because one form of it was exceptionable and offensive) would encourage the same open behaviour

viour in other men, though actuated by very different motives.

If you cannot enjoy the benefit of social worship in the established church of your country, by rendering your praises and thanksgivings, and offering your supplications to the one infinite, eternal, and only God; there may be other places where this acceptable and grateful service may be conducted after a form which may intirely harmonize with the ingenuous convictions of your own mind. The apostle Paul hath not qualified, with any restriction, his exhortation, to *flee from idolatry* (1 Cor. x. 14.); and if words are capable of a determinate meaning, the nature of the offence, and our duty to avoid it, are equally clear.

If no other public place shall offer, and no means should present themselves of opening one of greater extent, you may convert a room in your own house to an house of prayer. There may be other persons in your neighbourhood, who may, from principle and similar sentiments, be glad to join you in so good a work; and even this little church may, in the course of a few years, be the occasion of planting a much larger one. Nor are you, or any man, unprovided with very good services for such religious societies.*

EUGENIUS. I am not insensible of the rectitude of the line of conduct which you have pointed out,
or

* See p. 39. note.

or of the advantage which the pursuing of it might produce to the true interests of religion and virtue ; but it would expose me to so much observation and reproach, as may bear down my spirit, and defeat the very end designed ; I may not be able to meet the fate of a reformer.

THEOPHILUS. This is to relinquish the post of duty, upon a plea every way inadequate and inadmissible, and very unworthy of a faithful servant and soldier of Jesus Christ. Personal privacy and ease are the least we can sacrifice in so good a cause as the advancement of the worship of the one God, and Father of all. Singular instances of integrity, in any of the ordinary concerns of life, do not indeed often escape sarcastic observations, and sometimes temporary scandal ; but they are, nevertheless approved by the virtuous and the good ; and bring, with every act in which they are connected, that peace and satisfaction which the unprincipled and profligate can neither take away, nor enjoy.*

As for your fearing that you should not be able to meet the fate of a reformer, I trust, for the honour of christendom, that all apprehension of being called to any very extraordinary sufferings for publicly maintaining the worship of one God, is entirely groundless.

* “ Certainly it is heaven upon earth to have a man’s mind move in charity, rest in providence, and turn on the poles of truth.”—Lord Bacon.

groundless. Positive persecution is disowned on all hands : honour and dishonour, good report and evil report, may indeed await you ; but surely your christian faith will support you under these fluctuations in your pilgrimage, and carry your mind into the contemplation of a crown of glory, and a future bliss that will never end.

EUGENIUS. The pointed force with which you direct your argument will carry conviction to any reasonable and ingenuous mind. The greatest danger is, halting between two opinions, between duty and inclination ; and the true state of the question, as it now lies before me for decision, is, shall I obey God or man ? Notwithstanding, however, this confession of my view of our subject, accompanied with a serious desire to acquit myself in a manner becoming my christian profession, I find myself, from a variety of motives (neither excusable, nor yet, I think, absolutely criminal), strongly reluctant to avow my sentiments explicitly before the world, and to second them by that conduct which they should seem to demand.

THEOPHILUS. The present state of your mind, my dear friend, leaves your conformity to the worship of the established church, or a silent, unobserved, clandestine retreat from it, equally inexcusable. Your last declaration amounts to a formal surrender of the question ; therefore, it now becomes more proper for me to leave you to your own reflections, which

which cannot fail to determine you to adopt that open and upright conduct which will best advance the glory of God, and can alone meet with his approbation. Every day's continuance in your present indecision, adds danger and criminality to your situation. You will recollect the exhortation in the book of revelation, to quit Babylon, and I know that you allow the application: *come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that you receive not of her plagues.*

A mind like yours, informed by voluntary and patient inquiry (in the midst of your prudent attention to your great secular concerns), will not long remain in your present reluctant and distressing inactivity. Where duty calls, I know your heart disposes you to obey. And the same course of study which has discovered to you the truth, will have sufficiently impressed you with its importance before all other considerations.

That knowledge which you have acquired, and which has led you out of intellectual darkness, will naturally point out that line of conduct insisted upon in the gospel, and which is made the condition of its promises. Having first convinced your understanding, it will animate your resolution to walk in that plain direct road, which turns neither to the right hand, nor to the left. Nor will your high sense of duty, or the goodness of your own heart, suffer you to rest, until you have made the last advance in this

G

journey

journey of religious and moral integrity, by shaking off every remaining shackle of religious bondage which any prejudice, timidity, or deference to others, may have fastened 'around you. In the perfect love and fear of God, in strict integrity and principle towards him, and in love and brotherly affection for all mankind, shall we alone find that peace of mind in this world, which is only to be exceeded by the happiness of another.

EUGENIUS. Our friendly and improving conversation upon the important subject which has engaged our attention, and really interested our affection for each other, may now be closed, since we are both become of one mind. Mutual acknowledgments of kindness have been received, and returned, between us. And the result of your victory, is liberty to the vanquished.

There requires so very little time to form a right decision of conduct, where the judgment is already convinced, and the mind is awakened to receive the force and impression of truth, that I do not hesitate a moment to acknowledge my entire satisfaction in your arguments; and to assure you that I will, from this hour, withdraw myself from a church, whose foundation is laid in exacting impositions upon the consciences of men, and whose constituent doctrine is idolatry.

There are, indeed, certain appendant circumstances in every man's situation with respect to his prejudices,

prejudices, habits, constitution, and connections, which cause him involuntarily to demur, where he ought instantly to decide. These, however, are under command; and shall henceforth vanish and give way to superior conviction and the obligations of truth.

Let these considerations excuse the trouble I have given you, while your candid forbearance with them have greatly enhanced to me the value of your friendship, which, I trust, will be uninterrupted to the end of our lives.

prejudices, habits, continuance, and confession,
which cause him involuntarily to deny, where he
ought instantly to be silent. I hope, however, we
understand, and shall therefore, with all
good way to superior conviction and satisfaction
of truth, the more we are able to do.
For those considerations about the people I have
given you, while your candid forebodings, with them
have greatly endeared to me the whole matter.
And, we hope, I trust, we are interested in the work
of our Lord.

REASONS
FOR RESIGNING THE
RECTORY OF PANTON
AND
VICARAGE OF SWINDERBY,
IN
LINCOLNSHIRE;
AND QUITTING THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.
BY JOHN DISNEY, D.D. F.S.A.

[Re-printed from the second edition, 1783.]

R E A S O N S
FOR QUITTING THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

A PUBLIC departure from my ministry in the established church, and withdrawing myself from all attendance on its worship, should seem not only to excuse, but to demand, a declaration of the reasons which have induced me to it, and made such a conduct necessary.

Several years have passed since a petition was offered to the consideration of parliament, praying for relief in the matter of subscription to articles of religious faith and doctrine. That petition had my entire concurrence. It maintained the only principle upon which any protestant church, or society of christians, can defend itself against the arguments urged in behalf of popery; and pleaded strongly, in my opinion, for the removal of all those human inventions and additions to the gospel of Jesus, which create the too general disbelief and rejection of it. The prayer of the petition, however, did not necessarily involve in it the truth or falsehood of any particular doctrines; neither did it ask the substitution of others, either in whole or in part, in the

place of the present system. Nevertheless, I presume, there were very few, if any, in the number of the petitioners, who did not look forward to a review and amendment of the established forms of public worship.

The ground which the petitioners had chosen was that impregnable rock, the sufficiency of the scriptures, to the purposes of edification and salvation, for all christian ministers, as well as others; and thence they grounded their plea, that no church, or society of christians, had a right to require assent to human formularies of religious faith and doctrine, as the terms of communion, or admission to the ministry, or otherwise.

The examination into the right of protestant churches, in thus arrogating and exercising the claim of imposing explanatory articles of religious faith, in addition to the scriptures, necessarily brought on a more strict enquiry into the agreement, or non-agreement, of the particular doctrines contained in the formularies of the church of England, with the word of God. The consequence of this further examination was productive of the clearest demonstration to many serious and liberal persons, that not a few of the doctrines of the established church were in no sort of agreement with the christian scriptures, whence they are presumed to be derived.

As far as this inquiry went to satisfy my understanding concerning these questions, I am free to
own,

own, that I was convinced that many doctrines received as true by the church of England, in her articles and liturgy, were not only in no agreement, but in direct contradiction to what appeared to me to be the word of God.

In this situation, I did not hesitate to determine never to accept any further preferment in the established church; because I could not conscientiously, and without equivocation, declare my assent and consent to the thirty-nine articles and liturgy, as by law is required. And this determination I have steadily adhered to more than once, when offers were made me of preferments, in all other respects desirable and advantageous to my secular interests. For some years I did not apprehend that my convictions would carry me any further. In this supposition, however, I have been mistaken. And the same principle and reasons which have heretofore made me decline to repeat my subscription, have forced me to make a resignation of my benefices, and of all the advantages I had acquired upon such terms.

The public service of the liturgy, or book of Common-Prayer, holds out for its objects of religious worship three distinct Beings, there styled, *God the father, God the son, God the holy ghost* :* *one God in trinity, and trinity in unity* :† *not one only person, but three persons* .‡

A 3.

These,

* Litany.

† Athanasian creed.

‡ Collect in communion service on trinity sunday,

These, and the like expressions, together with repeated and continued addresses by prayer to Jesus Christ, and even to the holy spirit, instead of the one true God, who hath no equal, or sharer, in the creation or government of the world, and who alone can hear the prayers of his creatures, are, according to my apprehension, in no way warranted by the word of God, as we read it in the old and new Testament, the only authority upon which, as christians and protestants, we can depend. But on the contrary, they appear to be in direct opposition to the express declarations of that Being, who declared himself, by Moses, to be ONE LORD (Deut. vi. 4.), and of Christ himself, whose words, borrowed also from Moses, are, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, him only shalt thou serve.* (Luke iv. 8.) And who, on all occasions, prayed to, and called upon the one God, the common father of all, who was *his father and our father, his God and our God.* (John xx. 17.) And who also declared, that he *came not to do his own will, but the will of God who sent him;* (chap. vi. 38.) that he honoured his father, and sought not his own glory; that he wrought all his wonderful works, not by his own power, but by the power of God; and further, who, in order to prevent misapprehensions of his proper character, renounced the bare appellation of *good*, given to him by the scribe in the gospel, saying, there was *none good but one, and that was God.* (Mark x. 18.)

Besides

Besides these particular, clear, and determinate authorities, my convictions of the divine unity are not founded upon single and detached passages, but on the whole tenor of the sacred scriptures, which speak one uniform and consistent language concerning it. *There is one God*, writes St. Paul, and *one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus*; (1 Tim. ii. 5.) and all the declarations of Christ himself, and of all the writers of the new Testament, say the same thing.

It is indeed very true, and ought to be observed, that there are to be found expressions in the new Testament, which may seem, at first sight, and even to some liberal persons, to favour the considering Jesus Christ as an object of divine worship; and whereby some may be induced to look upon him to be really and properly God. But all the countenance and assistance which the expressions of scripture al-
luded to give to such a doctrine, is derived either from the ambiguous use of the term *worship*, or from other alike doubtful phrases; or from the single instance of the protomartyr Stephen; all which have been often demonstrated by learned inquirers, to yield little satisfaction for the introduction of such a new object of worship: and especially when it is considered, that Christ never taught or enjoined men to worship himself, but the Father only; nor ever gave any instruction to his disciples, to teach such a doctrine to the world as that of worshipping himself, their
master

master and lord, as he declares himself to be to them, but not their *God*. (John xiii. 13.)

Under these convictions, the road of duty lay plain before me, hard as the measure might seem ; worldly considerations alone remained to prevent me from taking the direct path, and following the dictates of my conscience. And these temptations I had in no small degree. The just claims of an infant family pleaded hard not to be neglected. Nor could I refrain from thinking upon their situation with all the anxiety of parental affection, and, possibly, with more solicitude for their temporal provision, than the nature of my own difficulties ought to have admitted. I was agreeably situated in the circle of relations, and several esteemed friends, and have lived in a constant kind intercourse with all my parishioners, among whom I ever found my ministry acceptable. I had extended my usefulness among my neighbours in all the ways I was able. Nor was I forward to think that I could be equally useful under any change of situation which removed me to a different sphere of action. And I may add, that I was not insensible even to an acquired partiality to the place of my residence, where, on many accounts, and for reasons of a private nature, I could have wished to have continued, to the end of my life, in the enjoyment of every desirable accommodation and comfort which a reasonable mind could wish for.

These considerations deserved some thought, and they have had their full weight. But they are, after all,

all, considerations of subordinate and inferior importance, when contrasted with the positive duty I owe to God, to the gospel of Jesus, to my fellow-christians, and to myself.

It is no light matter to profess our religion in insincerity and hypocrisy. We are enjoined by high authority to worship God in spirit and in truth. And shall worldly temptations prevail upon any one, who seriously professes himself a christian, to worship any other than the one true God, Jehovah, the Father of all, while he believes that same self-existent and all-powerful Being to be God, and none other besides him? Or, shall we approach the great searcher of hearts with that duplicity and deceit which is not to be allowed in our dealings and intercourse with our fellow men? Or, shall we think to amend the matter by addressing our *private* prayers to the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, in compromise for our having *publicly* prayed, in the language of the church, to a trinity of Gods, or to *the man Christ Jesus*, who lived among us, and died upon a cross, and who himself renounced all adoration and worship? Shall we pray unto a man, though the most holy and excellent that ever lived on the earth, and thereby elevate the creature to the dignity of the creator, and take, from the unchangeable and only God and governor of the world, any of that praise and thanksgiving which we are enjoined to give unto him, and unto him only, and which are so peculiarly and eminently his own? Or, through our earnest desire
to

to continue in the established church, shall we prove our faith by mental reservations in the course of public worship, so that while we assent to one prayer, we reject another, or, possibly, divide a third, approving the former, and rejecting the latter part? Or, rather, shall we not, in all true simplicity and singleness of heart, as St. Paul writes, *pray with the spirit and pray with the understanding also?* (1 Cor. xiv. 15.)

I am ready to own, that my compliance in the use of those things which I did not approve, was at one time relieved by the consideration, that such compliance was only official, or ministerial. This argument, however, failed to afford satisfaction, on further reflection upon the strict integrity and sincerity absolutely necessary for divine worship.

I never did read, in the public service, the creed, vulgarly called the creed of Athanasius, considering it, to say the least, as entirely foreign to every good end of christian edification. And it is now about ten years since I entirely omitted the litany and Nicene creed, without giving any offence to my congregation, confining the exercise of my ministry in the morning service to my parish church of Swin-
derby, and an adjoining one in the county of Nottingham; thinking, at that time, that by taking upon myself the penalties of the law, I thereby released myself from my engagement to conformity. This expedient of omitting some of the most offensive parts of the public liturgy was afterwards superseded,
by

by considering my unconditional promise of conformity in a stronger point of view, than I had before beheld it.

But, besides the force of this obligation, the remedy was in itself insufficient, because the trinitarian expressions and forms of worship, and express prayer to Jesus Christ, occur so frequently, and are so blended and united throughout the service, that there is no satisfactory relief to be had by partial omissions, without breaking in upon, and interrupting, the regularity and order of the prayers, and consequently dispersing, or confounding, the pious affections of many serious and devout persons. Therefore, after something more than two years, I resumed the accustomed conformity to the ordinary parts of the public service.

From that time to the present I have continued to prosecute my inquiry, and have assiduously attended, in hopes of some satisfaction, to the many defences of the doctrine of the trinity. The result has, however, been my entire conviction of the divine unity in its utmost extent, and an increased sense of the importance of these great truths, *that GOD IS ONE, and HE ONLY to be worshipped.*

Under the accumulated influence of this fixed opinion, entertained after successive examinations, under many doubts, and much anxiety of mind, my continuing to minister under a form of religious worship confessedly trinitarian, or tritheistic, became more seriously grievous. The earnest desire to
worship

worship the one God, and Father of all, in the simplicity of the gospel revelation, gained additional strength and power over my mind; and my continuance in a practice so repugnant to my convictions, was every day more and more intolerable.

It has been suggested, on similar occasions, that to engage an assistant, whose opinions would lead him to a conscientious conformity to the services of the church, would remove all personal difficulty. This expedient was also no less insufficient to my relief than the former ones; for I should then have been neglectful of my duty in the place appointed me; and indirectly assenting, by the employment of another, to that which I did still disbelieve. And I must then have absented myself from all public worship of almighty God, or have entirely forsaken the people of whom I had taken the charge. And this I should have done, for no better reason than because I wished to enjoy the emoluments of my preferment, while I scrupled to discharge the duties annexed to my situation; and should have set an example of the most dissingenuous dealing, and of a neglect of the ordinances of God.

Thus, after the most deliberate consideration of all arguments, and after passing several painful years in much solicitude and apprehension of incurring the displeasure of almighty God, I had but one choice to make, if ever I hoped for his approbation. I, therefore, in obedience to the fullest convictions of my mind,

mind, have resigned my ministry and preferments in the church of England.

I should be much concerned, if any good man should so interpret this secession of mine from the worship of the church established, as if I thereby, in the most remote degree, took upon me to blame, or condemn, those who may continue their ministrations in it, even though their opinions on certain doctrines may nearly approach to my own.

I am sensible, from what has passed within myself, how differently similar convictions operate in different states of the mind, and how very long a man may be prevailed upon to go on doing things in which he blames himself, from regards to a family, or to more distant kindred, and to various other local circumstances, which cannot easily be explained to others; and the still greater difficulty, at a certain time of life, of finding bread for a family any where else.

I am thankful now, and I trust I shall always be so, whatever be the event as to this world, that I have been brought out of a situation, in which I went on, from day to day, condemning myself, and that it has pleased divine providence to lead me to a station, where I may still bear my testimony to the truth and holiness of the gospel, and have the satisfaction of being united to a congregation of christians, assembling at the chapel of Essex-Street, London; where prayer is avowedly made to the only true God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and where I shall still have more cause to be thankful, if my

labours may be so far successful, that I may be an instrument of promoting his sole worship, and at the same time, serve the great end of the gospel, in encouraging and exciting myself and others to piety and all virtue.

I have been led to say thus much concerning myself, in order to state the motives and reasons of my finally quitting or departing from, the established church; and to convince others, that such my withdrawing from it, is not the consequence of an hasty and undigested thought, but of much careful examination and serious reflection, and of an earnest desire to worship God, according to what I am now fully persuaded is agreeable to his own directions in the scriptures. The difficulties and embarrassments of my mind have, for a long time, been well known to several of my more intimate and much esteemed friends. Nor have there been wanting some, who, while they felt for all my uneasiness, affectionately sympathized also with me in respect of the many particular circumstances which attended my situation, but which it is not necessary here to relate.

It may probably hence arise, that I may expose myself to some misconstruction and evil report, as even persons the most unprejudiced in these matters, from the nature of the case, are unable to judge quite right, or decide for others. Nevertheless, I can safely say, that I take with me the most entire approbation of my own mind. And it is impossible so to regulate our conduct, as to satisfy the dis-

cordant

cordant and contradictory opinions of mankind. I have complied with the established forms of religious worship full as long as I could excuse myself therein; so that my continuance in the church unto this time, and my present separation from it, should equally bespeak a patient hearing, and candid judgment, from the firmest friend to the established doctrines. Whatever names of reproach may be given on the present, or on similar occasions, I am well satisfied that there is no *guilty heresy*, nothing wrong, in following the convictions of my own mind, after a full examination; and, moreover, that there would have been great hypocrisy in continuing any longer to conform to a mode of worship quite contrary to my convictions.

It has ever been my desire and practice, in the course of my ministry, to explain the great truths of christianity, and thence to enforce and press upon my hearers the moral duties of the gospel, and the indispensable necessity of a virtuous and holy life; to remind them, that to live soberly, righteously, and piously, in this present world, to fear God and keep his commandments, to love our neighbour, and assist him by all kind offices, are among the things first needful, and of the greatest importance.

I make no doubt, but the time will come, when the forms of worship in the liturgy of the church of England will be corrected, and reduced nearer to the standard of scripture. But, alas! this will not be the work of my day. This generation will probably

bably pass away without seeing it. In the mean time, individuals must satisfy themselves in their compliance with the present system, according to their different apprehensions of the truth of it, or seek their relief by peaceable retirement from a church, with which they are not agreed in the object of religious worship. In either of these cases, there is no just occasion given for reproach. The concern is personal, and confined to the conscience of every individual; over which, neither the magistrate, nor any private persons, single or associated, have any authority.

To you, the parishioners of Swinderby, among whom I have lived in entire harmony, and to whom my labours in the ministry have been chiefly devoted; to you, I would say in particular, that I leave you, my honest affectionate neighbours, with regret; but sincerity towards God requires it, and this you will always think right, and to be followed. May you remember, and improve, by my late constant endeavours to instruct you according to the revealed will of God! I hope you will continue to go forward in the knowledge and obedience of the gospel of Jesus Christ, framing your lives and conversation by it, as I also will strive to do; so shall we secure a meeting again in the future everlasting kingdom of God, the father of all the families of the earth: To whom be glory, both now and for ever. Amen.

A
L E T T E R
TO THE
REVEREND MR. D—,
BY A L A Y M A N.

1775.

A

n
f
g
m
c

ve
de
wh
fro
me
G

A
L E T T E R,
TO THE
REVEREND MR. D—,
BY A L A Y M A N.

1775.

REV. SIR.

As, of late, I have not attended upon your ministry so constantly as heretofore; and as I have some ground to think that you judge me to be guilty of a fault in absenting myself, you will permit me to assign a reason in justification of my conduct.

You are very sensible, sir, that you and I differ very much in our religious opinions; so much, indeed, that I have heard you declare, that a person who thinks as I do, is, on that account, *excluded from salvation*. Such a declaration, however, affects me but little; knowing well, that the great and good God hath never so declared; and therefore esteeming

the sentence of any frail and fallible man as a thing of little moment. Though, by the way, it seems no trifling affair, with respect to the person himself, who places himself in the seat of judgment, and pronounces condemnation on his brother for his opinions. This man had need look well to his authority. And how if, in the end, it should appear that the party so condemned, is one whom God *approves*? But to return:—The wide difference in our sentiments, of necessity, prevents my gaining that profit from your ministry, which I would heartily wish to gain: and thus the principal design of public worship is defeated. How should I be *profited* by what I am *shocked* and *grieved* to hear?—by that which the reverence which I owe to the ever blessed God obliges me to regard without abhorrence?—that at which I am really *ashamed* to be *shocked* and *grieved no more*; as, indeed, I should be, if I had such a sense of God upon my mind as I ought to have. Yet although I think so ill of your tenets, considered in themselves, believing your *sincerity* unquestionable, I do, at the same time, account you a good and a worthy man. Such is every man, who, according to his best judgment, practises what is right and good. Sincerity, sir, is the *chief thing* in religion. You would think it so in a matter between you and your friend. And why not in religion? Because, say you, the great God doth not judge as man judges. Now, as I apprehend this to be a capital mistake, I will examine it a little; and

and what I shall say of it will be no improper introduction to what follows.

And surely, if the great God did not judge of good and evil as we judge, he would never have made this appeal to the wicked Israelites. "O house of Israel! are not my ways equal? Are not your ways unequal?"—It will be readily granted, that the thoughts and ways of the deity are, in one respect, far above our thoughts, and our ways. It would be very strange if it were not so. The divine mind, seeing the whole compass of truth, and acting even to the extremest bounds of the universe, consequently sees and acts upon reasons unknown to us. But, as all truth is *consistent*, that which is unknown to us cannot be *opposite* and *contradictory* to that which is known. Shall we, then, say we know *nothing*? In this case would not our own hearts testify the falsity of our assertion? Shall we say that human reason was so totally perverted by the fall, that it only deceives us? And shall we *prove* this too? But how? Shall we prove by *reason* that reason is *deceitful*? The attempt has often been made: but certainly no absurdity can be more gross. Shall we prove it by scripture? But suppose we are asked, "have you any good *reason* to think the genuine sense of the scripture is such?" What shall we answer? If we say *no*; in this case will not our consciences condemn us, for *receiving* such doctrine as the genuine sense of scripture. If we say *yes*; is it not, then, manifest

that, in judging of the sense of scripture, we are determined by *reason*? And thus is it not manifest, that the scriptural proof of *reason's deceitfulness*, is ultimately derived from *deceitful reason itself*? It is undeniably: and consequently such proof is *deceitful proof*, and cannot be depended upon. If we *do* depend upon it, in so doing we declare that *reason* is *not* deceitful, in direct opposition to the very tenet which we were intending to establish. Pray attend to this. Indeed, sir, it is very melancholy, to consider how men have confounded and perverted a reasonable nature. However, notwithstanding all that has been urged to the contrary, it is abundantly evident, that we are endowed with capacities *to judge* aright, (within certain limits) even as the great God himself judges, concerning good and evil*. It is true we may *incapacitate* ourselves, and then put the one for the other; and it seems *too true*, that this has been done by all who have persuaded themselves that human reason, as such, is totally perverted; so as to be quite unable to judge concerning good and evil, or things of a religious nature.

Thus much, sir, being premised, I now beg leave to mention those doctrines of your's, to which I principally object, and the ground of my objections.

The

* Your contrary belief seems to have no other support than the notion of *the deceitfulness of human reason*, resulting from the fall, which notion has *nothing* to support it.

The doctrines are, that of the trinity according to Athanasius; the doctrine of original sin; the doctrine of election and reprobation; the doctrine of the satisfaction, and that of imputed righteousness.

The doctrine of the trinity, as Athanasius and you represent it, appears to me utterly *absurd* and *contradictory*: because you represent the father, the son, and the spirit, as three separate *agents*, each of them *God*, each of them *infinite*: and yet you say there is but *one* infinite God. You will not, surely, say the father, son, and spirit, are *not* three separate *agents*; when, at the same time, you assert, that the father *sent* the son into the world, who, in consequence of being so sent, *came* into the world, and *did* and *suffered* what is recorded of him: when, at the same time, you assert also, that the father *sent* the spirit *in the name of the son*, and that the spirit, in consequence of being so sent, *came* into the world, and *convinced* mankind of sin, &c. Surely, sir, you will not say that the *sender* and the *sent*, he who *commands*, and he who *obeys*, are *not* separate *agents*, but the *same**. Here then are three *agents*, each of whom you affirm to be infinite,

* Whenever you declare the son and spirit to be *equal* with the father, you do, in the very terms, acknowledge that their *existence* is *separate* from the father's *existence*. You always conceive of things as *existing separately*, when you think of their *equality*: you cannot help it if you would. But you may *impose* upon yourself.

infinite, each of whom you affirm to be God, and to each of whom, as to the Lord your God, you pay divine worship. Yet you say there is but *one* infinite God. And you say well: but you miserably *contradict* yourself: and (however good your intention may be) you greatly *dishonour* the eternal deity, who is *one infinite agent*.

The doctrine of original sin, (according to you, sir) seems to consist of two parts:—In the first place, *guilt* derived from Adam's transgression upon all his posterity, whereby they are brought under the wrath and curse of God, and are made liable to the torments of hell for ever*:—and, secondly, *the total corruption of their nature*; which is such, that it renders them *sinners by nature*, and *dead* in trespasses and sins; so dead, that they are no more able to do any thing *truly good*, than a dead *corpse* is able to *arise and walk*.

With

* I believe, sir, this is a true representation of this part of your doctrine, which indeed you do not very much insist upon: but I beg leave to enquire why you do not? Why don't you preach several entire sermons to ascertain, illustrate, and enforce it; that so your hearers may know the value of it, being convinced how worthy it is of the *infinitely good God* to torment the posterity of Adam in hell fire for ever, not for *their own*, but for *Adam's* transgression? For my part I think you are obliged in conscience thus to do, as you often profess that you account it your duty to declare *the whole counsel* of God.

With respect to the first of these articles, I would observe, that if we know any thing whatsoever, we know that it is *not just* to punish *one* man for the sin of *another*. If it be asked, "How do you know this?" In return, I ask, how do you know that there is any thing *wrong*, or *inconsistent with justice*, in oppressions, murders, massacres, perjuries, blasphemies? Suppose any one should affirm that these things are very *innocent*. If you thought he deserved any notice, I doubt not you would eagerly contradict him. Yet you could not do it without shewing your inconsistency: for that same reason which declares these things to be *essentially unjust*, is equally clear, full, and positive in declaring the *injustice* of punishing *one* man for the sin of *another*. If this be *right*, there is not the shadow of a reason for thinking those horrid crimes to be *really criminal*. But we *know assuredly*, that oppressions, murders, massacres, perjuries, blasphemies, are really and essentially *criminal*: and, in the same manner, and with equal certainty, we know that to punish *one* man for the sin of *another*, neither *is*, nor *can* be just*. And, therefore, most sincerely do

* I have heard you say, sir,—you do not believe that infants are sent into hell. But if they are *punishable* for the sin of their first father, and if they are *actually punished* in some degree why should they not receive *the full punishment* which is due to them? And why was it, when we were talking of this matter, that you

do I *abhor* the doctrine which ascribes such a conduct to that righteous Being, whom I would always venerate and adore.

With respect to the second article in this doctrine, (*viz.*) the entire *corruption* of the human nature, whereby men are rendered *sinners by nature*, and utterly *incapacitated* to do any thing which is *truly good*, I would observe, that, if we consider what sin *is*, it will be found a contradiction to say a man is a *sinner by nature*. You may as well say that it is sinful for a man to have two *hands*, or two *feet*, as to say it is sinful

you seemed *unwilling* to be thought a believer in the damnation of infants? I apprehend you were shocked [for you *started*] at the impious tenet. It was well. The great God intended you should be shocked: and not at this tenet only, but also at several others which you believe and promulge. Indeed, he doth permit it to be otherwise. He endowed us with *liberty* (*i. e.* freedom of will) that we might be *accountable*. I would just take notice, here, that if we have *no* liberty, if nothing but actual sin can proceed from our nature, as nothing but an impure stream can proceed from an impure fountain; then are actual sinners (as you term them) and infants, upon the very same footing in respect of guilt; for these last were just as able to *prevent* the sin of their *first father*, as the others were to *prevent* what you term *their own* actual sins. I cannot give them that name; because as actual sin cannot subsist without agency, so neither without *liberty* can agency possibly subsist.

sinful for him to have human *passions*, or any thing else which belongs to him as a man. But then may sin be charged upon him, when he has knowingly and wilfully done the evil which he might have avoided, or *omitted* to do the good which he might have done. Till you can affirm either one or the other of him, you have no authority to call him a sinner. And when through his negligence or bad conduct, he has *corrupted* himself, and *acquired evil habits*, you may say he is a sinful and a wicked creature then, and not before. If this be the true account of sin and sinfulness, a *sinful nature*, as such, is plainly a contradiction. And can you, sir, prove that it is *not* the true account? If you can, I really think there is nothing too hard for you.

But even though it were not *impossible in itself*, that the human nature, as such, should be morally corrupt and sinful; yet, as it is *the work of God*, it must certainly be pure from all sinful stain. You will tell me, perhaps, that it is *not* the work of God: but surely all nature, without exception, is his work. However, you insist upon it, that the first man corrupted himself, and all those who descend from him in the course of nature. But what, I beseech you, is the course of nature? Without God it is *nothing*. By the powerful will of God all things were made: and that *will* is as needful for their *preservation*, as it was for their *production*. “Hitherto the Almighty worketh:” his energy is felt throughout the universe, and the course of nature is the *effect* of that energy.

Summer

Summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, the successive generations of plants and animals, with all the infinite variety of events which take place in the natural world—All these are the *result* of that divine operation which never ceases. Adam could never have left any posterity, if he had not been *empowered* by the will of God to propagate his species. If, then, he communicated a *sinful nature* to his children, he was empowered by the divine will *so to do*. The truth is, every child receives its being and its nature from God, who conveys it by the instrumentality* of the parents; and the divine energy is as much concerned in producing the nature of every child which is born, as it was in producing the nature of the first man. Suppose this energy to *cease*, and you certainly cannot imagine the course of nature to *continue*. Seeing, then, the human nature is *the work of God*, it *cannot* be a sinful nature. And it is worthy of your consideration, sir, that the bible tells us it is *the*

* If a man has done an action which is sinful, it cannot be denied that he was empowered by the divine will *so to do*: yet surely he dares not affirm, that, with respect to this sinful action, he was *nothing more* than the instrument in God's hand. It *depends* on a man whether the nature of his actions shall be sinful or otherwise. It depends *not* on him, whether the nature of his children shall be sinful or otherwise. The nature of his action is *his own work*; the nature of his child is *God's work*.

the express will of God, that the human nature should be *such as it is*: because it acquaints us, that, *after the flood*, this command was delivered, “be fruitful and multiply.”

The doctrine of election and reprobation asserts that, while a small part of mankind was, from eternity, *predestinated* to enjoy everlasting happiness in the heavenly world, the greater part by far was also *predestinated*, by the same gracious God, to suffer everlasting torments in hell fire.

That any man, whose understanding is not entirely *ruined*, should believe this doctrine, would be to me a matter of the greatest astonishment, if I were not yet more astonished to think, that it is believed by some who do really venerate their maker. If it doth not carry its own refutation along with it, it must be owned there is little hope of its being refuted. However, I would observe two things in relation to it. First, that if any one were about to utter the most horrid blasphemy against the ever blessed God, he would be put to it to invent any thing worse, *in kind*, than what is contained in this doctrine. Should he take the hint from it to affirm, that God *predestinated* all the creatures which he *hath* made, or in future *will* make, to suffer *everlasting torments*: this would be only a greater *degree* of the same *kind* of blasphemy. In the next place, I would take notice, that, when you say, “although “the great God hath, prior to their existence, pre-

B

“ *destinated*

Summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, the successive generations of plants and animals, with all the infinite variety of events which take place in the natural world—All these are the *result* of that divine operation which never ceases. Adam could never have left any posterity, if he had not been *empowered* by the will of God to propagate his species. If, then, he communicated a *sinful nature* to his children, he was empowered by the divine will *so to do*. The truth is, every child receives its being and its nature from God, who conveys it by the instrumentality* of the parents; and the divine energy is as much concerned in producing the nature of every child which is born, as it was in producing the nature of the first man. Suppose this energy to *cease*, and you certainly cannot imagine the course of nature to *continue*. Seeing, then, the human nature is *the work of God*, it *cannot* be a sinful nature. And it is worthy of your consideration, sir, that the bible tells us it is
the

* If a man has done an action which is sinful, it cannot be denied that he was empowered by the divine will *so to do*: yet surely he dares not affirm, that, with respect to this sinful action, he was *nothing more* than the instrument in God's hand. It *depends* on a man whether the nature of his actions shall be sinful or otherwise. It depends *not* on him, whether the nature of his children shall be sinful or otherwise. The nature of his action is *his own work*; the nature of his child is *God's work*.

the express will of God, that the human nature should be *such as it is*: because it acquaints us, that, *after the flood*, this command was delivered, "be fruitful and multiply."

The doctrine of election and reprobation asserts that, while a small part of mankind was, from eternity, *predestinated* to enjoy everlasting happiness in the heavenly world, the greater part by far was also *predestinated*, by the same gracious God, to suffer everlasting torments in hell fire.

That any man, whose understanding is not entirely *ruined*, should believe this doctrine, would be to me a matter of the greatest astonishment, if I were not yet more astonished to think, that it is believed by some who do really venerate their maker. If it doth not carry its own refutation along with it, it must be owned there is little hope of its being refuted. However, I would observe two things in relation to it. First, that if any one were about to utter the most horrid blasphemy against the ever blessed God, he would be put to it to invent any thing worse, *in kind*, than what is contained in this doctrine. Should he take the hint from it to affirm, that God *predestinated* all the creatures which he *hath* made, or in future *will* make, to suffer *everlasting torments*: this would be only a greater degree of the same *kind* of blasphemy. In the next place, I would take notice, that, when you say, "although
" the great God hath, prior to their existence, pre-

B

" *destinated*

“ *destinated and decreed* the greatest part of mankind
 “ to suffer everlasting torments in hell, he is, never-
 “ theless, infinitely *good and gracious*.” I have good
 reason to think, that your heart *recoils*, and flatly
denies what you utter with your tongue, though you
strive hard to believe it. I ask you, seriously, sir, is
 not such the fact? And do not you impute it to the
natural wickedness of your heart? I have no desire
 that you should answer me: but you will not do
 amiss, perhaps, in delivering your answer to him
 who *made you*, and made you *what you are*; that you
 might naturally *shudder* at this horrid tenet, as you
 naturally *shudder* at the most atrocious and shocking
 crimes.

The doctrine of the satisfaction is this; that Christ
 died *in the room and stead* of sinners, suffering a
 punishment equivalent to what was due to them, and
 thereby satisfied the law and justice of God. Now
 what do we understand by these words, punishment,
 law, justice? *Pain* and *punishment* seem to be very
 different things. The brute animals *suffer*, but are
not punished: for then, only, is a being punished,
 when he *suffers for sin charged upon him*. Law, in
 the present case, I take it to be an *authoritative edict*,
 prescribing to, and enjoining upon; *its own subjects*
 right conduct, and denouncing a penalty against dis-
 obedience. Justice is the same as righteousness; it
 is eternal and immutable. Whatever is just and
 right, is such in its own nature, it was always such,
 and

and such it must remain for ever. Likewise, whatever is unjust and wrong, is so in itself, eternally and immutably. The great God, who is omniscient, knows *all* that is right or wrong: and he, of his abundant goodness, hath made us capable of the same knowledge, *as far as is needful and proper for us*. He hath made us thus capable, in that he hath made us reasonable beings. As such, we understand and know, that, to practice obedience to our maker's will, is *right*. We understand and know, it is *right* for a child, who has it in his power, to relieve and support an aged parent in distress. And if a person return evil for good, we understand and know this to be *wrong*. And whatever it be which reason pronounces, with the same clearness, to be either just or unjust *such it is*. Every man must grant this, unless he will grant—he has *no reason* to think that to be just or unjust, which yet he *does* think to be so: I mean every man who allows the *existence* of justice and injustice. There was always a righteousness proper for every rational being existing, or designed to exist. This the ever blessed deity saw, and contemplated from everlasting. This is what I understand by eternal and immutable justice. It is founded on the *circumstances* and *relations* of beings. To instance among ourselves of the human race:—Should a man be either a father or a son, his being so related as he is, makes it just and right for him to do what does not belong to a person who is without children, or who has lost his parents. So riches, knowledge, wit, and

power, make a certain conduct to be just and right for their several possessors, which *cannot* be right for persons *differently circumstanced*. We have now, I believe, got the true meaning of the terms in question. But if law be such as hath been said, how shall its demands be satisfied? It is exceeding plain, that they never can otherwise than by a *compliance* with what is demanded. The law requires of its *own subjects* this alternative, "*obey, or suffer the penalty.*" Now, in either case, there is *compliance*, and, consequently *satisfaction*. But if they neither *obey*, nor *suffer the penalty*, there is *no compliance*, and, consequently, *no satisfaction*. It signifies nothing to say, that some person obeyed *in their stead*, or suffered *in their stead*. Neither the obedience nor the suffering of this person is what the law demands: each is *something else*: it is *no compliance*, and therefore *cannot* be satisfaction. If you were to require *one* thing of me, and I were to give you *another*, it could never be said that I had *satisfied your demand*. You, indeed, may be satisfied with something different from what you required: *you* may be changed. But, if the *law* be changed, it will not be the law which we are considering. Indeed, it was never supposed to be changed.—It should be remembered, however, that nothing can be more extravagant than to affirm any law to be *satisfied*, while its demands remain *unsatisfied*: and that these can only be satisfied by a *compliance* with what is demanded: and that, as the obedience and sufferings of Christ are *no such compliance* with what
the

the law of God demands, (which is the obedience or suffering of *its own subjects*) therefore Christ *hath not* satisfied the law of God, in the room and stead of sinners.

And that justice cannot be satisfied by the vicarious punishment of an innocent person, is sufficiently evident from this one consideration---that justice absolutely *forbids* to punish the innocent. This you acknowledge, when you say (in regard to sickness and pain) that infants would not be *punished*, if they were not *guilty*. However, you say, that as Christ *consented* to endure punishment, that *consent* rendered him in *justice punishable*. Did it then *take away* his innocence? Did it render him properly *criminal*? If not; how then could it make him *punishable*? Will you affirm, that it is in the *nature* of such consent so to do? And that *any* one who *consents* to be punished, is *punishable in justice*? Sure you will not. But if you do, I must contradict you, and declare, that a being is *not* punishable on account of his *consent*, but only on account of his *crime*. It is really wonderful, that people should imagine justice might be *satisfied* by what is a *violation* of justice.

With respect to the doctrine of imputed righteousness, (*viz.*) that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to men, so as to become *their* righteousness;---I would observe, that to impute or reckon to me what is not mine, is *wrong* imputation, or *wrong* reckoning; it is declaring a thing *to be* what it *is not*. Moreover, it

is impossible to make that right conduct *which I never performed*, to become *truly mine*, merely by *declaring* it so to be. Suppose a person in great affliction be by some other person relieved, and made easy and happy; and suppose it should be generally reported that you relieved this distressed person, when you are conscious that you have *not* done it: it is then imputed and reckoned to you: but it is a *wrong* imputation; and it is plainly and utterly impossible that this *deed* should become *your* deed. Let who will *declare* it so to be, the matter is not altered hereby; and such declaration must inevitably be *untrue*. There are some who understand this doctrine somewhat differently from what I have defined it to be; but you, sir, I think, do not. Indeed, I take yours to be the true and proper idea of the doctrine: for if a person *only derive benefit* from Christ's righteousness, there is *no* imputation in the case*.

I really shudder to reflect on the counterpart of this doctrine—the imputation of the sins of men to the blessed son of God. But if you be a consistent believer in imputed righteousness, you *must* believe in such imputation of sins. Indeed, I hope you are not consistent; for, if you be, you can have no objection

* You believe (if I do not misunderstand you) that if a man be *approved* of God, it is not on account of *his own righteousness*, but on account of *the righteousness of Christ*, with which the man is *adorned*, as with a glorious robe.

objection to that horrid assertion, which I dare say you are not unacquainted with (*viz.*) that the great God turned away his face from his expiring son as from *an abominable object*. This tenet is by no means compatible with the idea of the *innocent* enduring punishment instead of the *guilty*: but I am not surpris'd at the inconsistency.

Yet all these doctrines, you think, are warranted by the word of God. And do you really think, sir, that the sacred word can warrant such doctrines as these? I think myself well authorised to declare them absurd, impossible, impious—and, therefore, *false*. If you deny the charge, you should prove the contrary: which if you do, you will perform great and eminent service for the cause in which you are embarked. Till this is effected, either by you or somebody else, I must think it is not doing the word of God much real honour, to say, as you do, that these doctrines are not only warranted by it, but are the principal and most excellent doctrines which it delivers to us. I sincerely bless God, that he hath taught me to put a much better, and a more natural interpretation upon his word, which has been lamentably obscured by the glosses of both ill-meaning and well-meaning persons. And, as I esteem the revelation which God has given us in the scriptures to be an invaluable treasure, I am very sorry to see it so sadly perverted, as to be made to countenance opinions which are a reproach to religion. Such
opinions

opinions (pardon me, sir,) I must hear, and little else, if I attend upon your ministry. I must hear the most unworthy and degrading representations of the glorious deity, and, what is still worse, I must hear injustice and cruelty charged indirectly upon him who is perfectly just and infinitely benevolent. I must hear another, represented as *equal* to him who is declared to be "the ONLY true God;" and who himself hath, in his own person, said---"I am God, and there is none else." I must hear prayers, (in which I would not join for the whole world) wherein penitent confession is made to him who created and formed us of a *sinful nature*, and a *heart naturally full of wickedness*: I must hear this confession, instead of a devout thanksgiving for those intelligent and moral faculties, whereby we are made capable of religious and heavenly felicity. And I must hear praise and thanks ascribed to the ever blessed God, for satisfying justice by that which his soul must utterly abhor---by *the punishment* of his holy, and innocent, and beloved son, &c. &c. Sir, I am *shocked* and *grieved* to hear these things.

I have a little more to add, and I have done. I cannot help observing a very remarkable difference between your preaching, and that of many whose principles are a good deal similar to your own. These persons judging, that although men are naturally corrupt, they are *moral* agents still; and judging, moreover, that the gospel hath revealed nothing more plainly

plainly than this truth ;—" that the present state is a
 " state of *trial* and *discipline*, having respect to
 " another state, where we are to be dealt with, ac-
 " cording to our behaviour in this ;"—they do gene-
 rally explain and enforce those *duties* which are re-
 quired of us, insisting on the various arguments and
 motives drawn from the nature of things, as well as
 those peculiar to the gospel. Now, it is true, sir, I
 have heard you acknowledge, that the present state
 is a state of trial ; but your preaching totally *excludes*
 this truth : for you deny the moral agency of
 mankind ; affirming, that men are no more able to
 do any thing *truly good*, than a dead *corpse* is able to
 arise and walk ; and one great part of your business
 is to describe the *misery* and *sinfulness* of this which
 you call our *natural state*. Instead of counselling
 your hearers (as was the apostle Paul's manner) to
 " labour that they may be accepted of God : because
 " we must all appear before the judgment-seat of
 " Christ, that every one may receive the things done
 " in his body, according to what he hath done,
 " whether it be good or bad : " you tell them that,
 if they have the smallest portion of *true grace* (which,
 you aver to be sovereign, *i. e.* arbitrary) they shall
 certainly be saved ; but if they are never so happy as
 to be made partakers of this *grace* (which, being
 sovereign, doth not at all depend upon any thing they
 can do) they must inevitably be lost. That is—those
 who are lost, are lost *for want of grace* ; and not be-
 cause

cause they *did* the evil which they *might have avoided*, and *omitted* to do the good which they *might have done* *. You tell them, further, that they must never expect to *recommend* themselves to God by any thing they can perform. A piece of doctrine which doth not seem to correspond very well, either with the passage just quoted, or with the exhortation of the same apostle, addressed to the Thessalonians, as follows—" We beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk, and to *please* God, so ye would abound more and more." And yet it must be owned, that you express great disapprobation of the conduct of such as think to be accepted of God, *without* the practice of what is good. I look upon this as a very *happy* inconsistency, resulting from the principles of that nature, which (however you may depreciate and vilify it) is *the excellent workmanship* of God, his rich and invaluable gift.

A manner of preaching so very opposite to this leading doctrine of the gospel—that we shall be dealt with according to our behaviour in the present state of *trial* and *discipline*---appears to me so contrary to the intention of preaching, that it is not likely I should

* You may possibly say, with some, that wicked men can abstain from evil, and do good, if they *will*; while yet you affirm they *cannot* will. But surely a man cannot *do* what he cannot *will* to do. To tell him he can, is to insult him.

should receive much benefit from it : especially it is not likely, as I consider it liable to the preceding objections.

And now, sir, I have given you my reasons for non-attendance upon your ministry. It is not because I have a *dislike* to public worship. So far from it, I cannot help thinking it a misfortune to be thus debarred from what I esteem a great and desirable privilege. I should rejoice to join with my fellow-christians in such worship as I think agreeable to the true spirit of christianity : but were I to join with *you*, I should, *in many instances*, wrong my conscience : and in barely giving attendance, I cannot avoid being *hurt*, more or less, by what I hear. When I do attend, I endeavour to make the most of what I approve, join in the worship where I *can*, and pay a particular regard to your sincerity and upright meaning. If it should be asked, why I attended constantly so long ; I did it, because I was afraid of setting a bad example, or rather what might be so construed. But, on further consideration, there seems no great reason to fear this, as it is well known, that I do not make the day a day of *pleasure* : and I hope, and am persuaded, that my absence is not suspected to proceed from a *disregard to religion*.

In this letter, sir, I have not scrupled to declare my sentiments of your opinions with a great deal of *frankness* : you may possibly think, *too much*. But the case required it. And I doubt not you would have

have been as free with my principles, if you had written to me on the subject.---I had in view the honour of God, and the christian religion, as well as the justification of my own conduct. I assure you, that I neither intended, nor do intend, any thing like hostility: for, however much I may think you *mistaken*, as a man I esteem and respect you; and have not designedly failed to *shew* my respect upon proper occasions, when you were either present or absent. I now beg leave to offer you my best wishes, and subscribe myself,

Reverend sir,

Your real friend,

and very humble servant.

AN
EXHORTATION
TO ALL
CHRISTIAN PEOPLE,
TO REFRAIN FROM
TRINITARIAN WORSHIP.

We preach unto you, that ye should turn unto the
LIVING GOD, who made heaven and earth and the
sea, and all things that are therein. Acts xiv. 15.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In the following address, great use is made of a tract entitled, "*A free and serious address to the christian laity, especially those, who, being of unitarian sentiments, conform to trinitarian worship,*" which is ascribed to Mr. Toulmin, of Taunton. The words of other authors, as quoted by that writer, are also in some places adopted, without any reference being made to them.

[Re-printed from the second edition, 1789.]

P R E F A C E

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE writer of the following address is unwilling to let a second edition of it appear, without attempting to point out the inconsistency of those who have expressed their approbation of the sentiments it contains, whilst they continue to join in trinitarian worship. It was not drawn up so much with the view of exposing the errors of the book of Common-prayer, as of prevailing upon you, who are sensible of those errors, to discontinue the use of devotional forms, which you look upon as inconsistent with the scriptures. Be intreated, brethren, carefully and seriously to review the considerations which are laid before you, in this little tract. Carry in your minds, whilst you are reading it, that *you* are the persons principally addressed. Apply every *argument*—for religion is a *personal* concern---apply every argument to *yourselves*. Examine them carefully, and inquire if you can be justified in treating them with neglect. Do not trifle with yourselves. Beware of admitting any vain plea, as a sufficient apology for your acting incon-

ADVERTISEMENT.

In the following address, great use is made of a tract entitled, "A free and serious address to the christian laity, especially those, who, being of unitarian sentiments, conform to trinitarian worship," which is ascribed to Mr. Toulmin, of Taunton. The words of other authors, as quoted by that writer, are also in some places adopted, without any reference being made to them.

[Re-printed from the second edition, 1789.]

P R E F A C E

TO THE

SECOND EDITION.

THE writer of the following address is unwilling to let a second edition of it appear, without attempting to point out the inconsistency of those who have expressed their approbation of the sentiments it contains, whilst they continue to join in trinitarian worship. It was not drawn up so much with the view of exposing the errors of the book of Common-prayer, as of prevailing upon you, who are sensible of those errors, to discontinue the use of devotional forms, which you look upon as inconsistent with the scriptures. Be intreated, brethren, carefully and seriously to review the considerations which are laid before you in this little tract. Carry in your minds, whilst you are reading it, that *you* are the persons principally addressed. Apply every *argument*—for religion is a *personal* concern---apply every argument to *yourselves*. Examine them carefully, and inquire if you can be justified in treating them with neglect. Do not trifle with yourselves. Beware of admitting any vain plea, as a sufficient apology for your acting incon-

sistently with your convictions. Will you say that you are advanced in life---that your habits are fixed---that it is too late for you to think of forsaking the ways to which you have been accustomed from your infancy? And do you really think that such an excuse will be admitted by the great searcher of hearts? An excuse for what? For acting as an hypocrite, and for supporting those gross corruptions of the gospel which rob it of its beautiful simplicity, and prove an insurmountable stumbling-block in the way of unbelievers of every denomination. If such an apology will acquit you, it will acquit the greatest sinner upon earth; for such an one can plead that his habits are of too long a standing for him to root them up. The fact, however, is, that this consideration, instead of excusing him, will serve to aggravate his guilt and increase his punishment. Trifle, therefore, no longer—no longer confess the truth in words, whilst in actions you deny it: assert the fairness and simplicity of your characters. Let the promise of our lord to those disciples who should act a consistent part, animate you to surmount the difficulties which lie in your way. “He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.” Matt. x. 39. In the present happy times, the friends of the truth have not those dreadful hardships to encounter, which in former days fell to the portion of those who stood forth in opposition to prevailing errors. But still, if you act agreeably to your convictions, you must

must expect to meet with some reproach and opposition. "In the world we must have tribulation: but let us be of good cheer: our lord hath overcome the world." Let his example encourage us. Let us be neither terrified from bearing an unwavering testimony to the truth, nor irritated against those who may condemn us. Ere long they may become our firmest friends. And if it be otherwise, let us not render evil for evil, or railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing---in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. This is by no means inconsistent with the most determined zeal for the truth. Let us always remember that it is not the *men*, but their *errors*, that we are to oppose. Of the men, let us endeavour to think as charitably as possible. Let us avoid putting the most unfavourable construction even upon their heat and violence. Let us not be ever ready to impute that behaviour to mere malice, which may really spring from a sincere attachment to what they believe to be the truth. One should hope that the violence of persecutors may sometimes be ascribed to the mistakes of the head, and not to the depravity of the heart. I trust that some of those who would draw the sword against us on earth, will rejoice to meet us in heaven.

But whilst you exercise the greatest candour towards those who differ from you, permit me to recommend it to you to take every opportunity of attempting to correct their errors, and to give them juster

notions of the christian religion. You, who have been educated conformists, must enjoy many opportunities of doing this, which do not fall in the way of those whose connections naturally lie among dissenters from the established church. You likewise are better able to enter into the feelings of churchmen than they are, and can afford a more unequivocal evidence, that a regard to truth, and to consistency of character, has really some practical influence upon your own minds.

And whilst you are thus exerting yourselves let the excellence of your conduct be answerable to the warmth of your zeal. Those who greatly interest themselves in matters of religion, are always watched by the world with the most critical exactness, and are expected to live under the influence of that religion, about which they appear so much concerned. Let your light, then, so shine before men, that they, seeing your good works, may glorify your father who is in heaven.

AN
EXHORTATION
TO REFRAIN FROM
TRINITARIAN WORSHIP.

MY CHRISTIAN BRETHREN,

It is upon a matter of great importance that I am now about to address you. I trust you will pay all possible attention to what I am going to say. May God almighty give you a serious, unprejudiced mind! May he open your eyes to the truth as delivered by the blessed Jesus! May he enable you to obey the dictates of your consciences, and to follow your honoured and beloved master, through evil report, or through good report, through life or through death! It is under a sense of the presence of the great God and, I trust, with a view to his honour and glory, that I now exhort you to turn from the worship of those who are *called* gods, whether in heaven or in earth, and to confine your religious homage to that ONE GOD, THE FATHER, of whom are all things*.

You know, my brethren, it was foretold by the apostles, that there should be a great falling away from the simplicity of Christ, and that the gospel,
that

* 1 Cor. viii. 5.

that precious jewel, should be greatly tarnished, in passing through the polluted hands of men. Their prophecy was remarkably fulfilled. Christianity was quickly disfigured. It was but about two hundred and fifty years ago, that those doctrines which we term the errors of popery, were firmly held by almost all the christian church: and when our forefathers began to discover their mistakes, the corruptions of christianity had gained so firm a footing, and had been established so many hundred years, that old gospel truths were looked upon by most men as mere novelties, and nothing was more common than for the catholics to cry out upon the protestants, "Where was your doctrine before Luther arose? Where was your church before king Edward's days?"

It was not to be expected, that men should at once obtain an unclouded view of christianity; that they should at once see through all the errors which had been collecting together for more than a thousand years. Accordingly, though (in the midst of much insult and opposition) they removed a great deal of rubbish from the fair gospel building, they suffered no small quantity to remain: though they attacked, with all their might, one species of idolatry, they strained every nerve to support another, persecuting unto death those who would worship no other being than the one God and Father of all. So generally has the doctrine of three eternal persons (each of whom is
said

said to be God) been received, even by protestants, that I should not wonder if some of you, my friends, for want of knowing better, should follow the example of the catholics, and charge us, who deny that doctrine, with introducing novelties: though it has been proved, to the satisfaction of many worthy christians, that the *body of believers*, for the space of more than two hundred years after Christ, held that the *Father only is God*, and that the lord Jesus was nothing more than his highly favoured son and messenger*. This is very different from the doctrine of the church of Rome, of England, or of Scotland. How widely these churches have deviated from the faith of the holy scriptures, as well as from the practice of Jesus and his apostles, with regard to religious worship, you will be able to form some judgment from the following contrast.

* The heads of the argument to prove this point, may be seen in a little pamphlet, entitled, " A general view of the arguments for the unity of God, and against the divinity and pre-existence of Christ, from reason, from the scriptures, and from history." But those who wish to see the question fully canvassed, will peruse the controversy between Dr. Priestley and Dr. Horsley, &c.

DIRECTIONS

DIRECTIONS *relative to the OBJECT of worship,*
with specimens of PRAYERS—of devout WISHES,
&c.

Found in the CHRISTIAN
 SCRIPTURES.

“Thou, when thou prayest, pray to thy FATHER, who is in secret, and thy FATHER, who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly. After this manner, therefore, pray ye: Our FATHER, who art in heaven.”—*Matt. vi. 6, 9. Luke ix. 2.*

“Jesus saith—the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and in truth, for the FATHER seeketh such to worship HIM.” *John iv. 23.* See also *John*

Found in the BOOK of
 COMMON PRAYER,
and in the writings of
 PRESBYTERIANS *and*
 other DISSENTERS.

“The catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in trinity and trinity in unity.—*Athanasian creed.*

“Then likewise the minister shall say, Glory be to the Father, and to the son, and to the holy ghost; Answer, As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end*.”—*Morning service.*

“Above all things, ye must give most humble

* *Pope Damasus* is said to have decreed, in a Roman council, that glory to the Father, and to the son, and to the holy ghost, should be said or sung at the end of the psalms. This was in the latter part of the fourth century.

From the Scriptures.

xiv. 13, 14. xv. 16.
xvi. 23.

“ I bow my knees
unto the FATHER of
our lord Jesus Christ, of
WHOM the whole family
in heaven and earth is
named.” Eph. iii. 14,
15.

“ Giving thanks al-
ways, for all things unto
GOD, even the FATHER,
in the name of our lord
Jesus Christ.” Eph. v.
20. See also ch. ii. 18.
Rom. xv. 6. Col. i. 3,
12. ch. iii. 17. James
iii. 9. 1 Pet. i. 17*.

From the Com. Prayer, &c.

and hearty thanks to
God the Father, the son
and the holy ghost, for
the redemption of the
world, &c.” *Communion
service.*

“ It is very meet,
right, and our bounden
duty, that we should, at
all times and in all
places, give thanks unto
thee, O Lord! almighty
and everlasting God, who
art one God, one lord;
not one only person, but
three persons, in one sub-
stance. For that which
we believe of the glory of

* It is said, Heb. i. 6. “ when he bringeth in the
“ first begotten into the world, he saith, and let all
“ the angels of God worship him :” and we read of
particular persons worshipping our lord. But it is
well known that by the term *worship* is not always
meant *religious* adoration. It is frequently used to
describe those marks of respect which are paid to great
characters. Some of the persons who are said to have
worshipped Jesus, (Matt. viii. and ix. 18.) were jews.
Now the jews paid *religious* worship to God only.

Indeed

From the Scriptures.

From the Com. Prayer, &c.

“ At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O FATHER, lord of heaven and earth, because THOU hast hid these things from the wise and

father, *the same** we believe of the son, and of the holy ghost, without any difference or inequality.” *Upon the feast of trinity.*

Indeed I should imagine that few trinitarians themselves will assert that at the period when the leper or the ruler worshipped (or made obeisance to) Jesus, the doctrine of his deity was publicly taught. Consequently that worship had nothing in it of a religious nature.

It is said, 1 Chron. xxix. 20. “ All the congregation worshipped the lord and the king :” and in Daniel ii. 46. “ that Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face “ and *worshipped* Daniel, and commanded that they “ should offer an oblation (or present) and sweet odours “ unto him,” as a mark of respect, agreeable to the eastern method of doing persons honour. Jesus also, speaks of a servant who fell down before his master, and *worshipped* him. Matt. xviii. 26. When therefore we read that the *leper worshipped* Jesus—that his disciples, upon his ascension, worshipped him, &c. it is reasonable to understand it as meaning nothing more, than that they did him homage, as a great character, or as a divine prophet. You will be confirmed in this, upon finding that all their religious addresses were directed to the one God, the Father of Jesus.

* If ye loved me, said the lord Jesus to his disciples, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father : for *my Father is GREATER than I.* John xiv. 28.

From the Scriptures.

prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so FATHER, for so it seemed good in THY sight." Matt. xi. 25, 26. Luke x. 21.

" And he—fell on his face and prayed, saying, O MY FATHER, if it be possible let this cup pass from me : nevertheless *not* as I will but as THOU wilt." Matt. xxvi. 39. See Mark xiv. 36. Luke xxii. 42. xxiii. 34. 46.

" And Jesus lift up his eyes and said, FATHER I thank thee that THOU hast heard me." John xi. 41.

" Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say, FATHER save me from this hour ? but for this cause came I unto this hour. FATHER, glorify thy name." John xii. 27, 28.

From the Com. Prayer, &c.

" Religious worship is to be given to God the father, the son, and the holy ghost ; and to him alone." *The Assembly's confes. of faith*, ch. 21.

" The second part of prayer is adoration, and it contains (1.) A mention of his nature as God ; and this includes his most original properties and perfections : his unity of essence, that there is no other God besides him : his inconceivable subsistence in three persons, the father, the son, and the holy spirit ; which mystery of the trinity is a most proper object of our adoration and wonder since it so much surpasses our understanding." —

Watts's Guide to prayer, p. 6.

" We must give honour to three persons in

From the Scriptures.

"Holy FATHER, keep, through thine own name, those whom THOU hast given me." John xvii.

II. See also John xvii. 1, 3, 5, 13, 24, 25, and Acts iv. 24, &c.

"Blessed be GOD, even the FATHER of our lord Jesus Christ, the FATHER of mercies and the GOD of all comfort, who comforteth us in all our tribulation." 2 Cor. i. 3. See also Eph. i. 3.

"Blessed be the GOD and FATHER of our lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." 1 Peter i. 3.*

* We read, Acts vii. 59. that "they stoned Stephen calling (*upon God* is not in the original) and saying, Lord Jesus receive "my spirit," or breath of life, as
if

From the Com. Prayer, &c.
the godhead distinctly: to the Father, the son, and the holy ghost." *Henry's Method of prayer.*

"Thou art the king of glory, O Christ. Thou art the everlasting son of the Father." "We therefore pray thee to help thy servants, whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood.— Make them to be numbered with thy saints in glory everlasting." *Te Deum.*

"O God the son, redeemer of the world, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

"O God the holy ghost, proceeding from the father and the son, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

From the Scriptures.

"According to the will of GOD, the FATHER, to whom be glory for ever and ever." Gal. i. 4, 5.

"Now unto GOD, even our FATHER, be glory for ever and ever." Phil. iv. 10.

"Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise GOD, be honour and glory for ever and ever." 1 Tim. i. 17. See also Matt. vi. 13. Luke ii. 14. Rom.

From the Com. Prayer, &c.

"O holy, blessed, and glorious trinity, three persons and one God, have mercy upon us miserable sinners.

"Whom thou hast redeemed with thy most precious blood. By the mystery of thy holy incarnation; by thy holy nativity and circumcision; by thy baptism, fasting and temptation; by thy agony and bloody sweat; by thy cross and passion; by thy precious death and burial;

if he had said, "accept this sacrifice of my life which I lay down for thy sake." Stephen had just seen the heavens opened, and the son of man standing at the right hand of God. The impression made by so grand a spectacle would not quickly wear off. Is it wonderful then that he should address that son of man? When we are in similar circumstances, it is to be presumed that we may do the same. Paul says to Timothy, 1 Tim. i. 12. "I thank Jesus Christ our lord." But we may express our thankfulness towards any absent friend and benefactor, without directly addressing, much more without worshipping, that friend.

From the Scriptures.

i. 25. xi. 33, 36. xvi.
25, 27. 2 Cor. xi. 31.
Eph. iii. 20, 21. 1 Tim.
vi. 14, 15, 16. 1 Peter
v. 10, 11. Jude 24, 25,
Rev. iv. 8, 11. vii. 11,
12.*

“ Grace be to you and
peace from God, our

From the Com. Prayer, &c.

by thy glorious resurrec-
tion and ascension; and
by the coming of the holy
ghost.

“ Son of God we be-
seech thee to hear us.

“ O lamb of God, that
takest away the sins of the
world, have mercy upon

* There are in scripture a few ascriptions of praise and glory to the lord Jesus, 2 Peter iii. 8. Rev. i. 5, 6. v. 9, 11, 12, 13. vii. 9, 10. but not one, as if he were the great God. Indeed, they are not *addressed* to him, as if he were supposed to be present, except in the Revelation, c. v. and vii. where he is represented as being actually before the angels who address him. It should also be observed that he is there addressed as the *lamb that was slain*, as a creature capable of dying, which can never be said of the eternal, unchangeable Jehovah. Indeed, they address him as a Being entirely distinct from God; “ thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God.” v. 9. If he be joined with God in this act of praise, it is no more than David was. “ All the congregation bowed down their heads, and worshipped the lord and the king.” 2 Chron. xxix. 20. Honour will be due to the holy Jesus, but not religious worship.—Rom. ix. 5. may be translated—“ the God over all (the supreme God) be blessed for ever.”

From the Scriptures.

FATHER, and the lord Jesus Christ." Rom. i. 7.

" Grace, mercy, and peace, from GOD, the FATHER, and Jesus Christ our lord." 1 Tim. i. 2.

" Grace be with you, mercy and peace from GOD the FATHER, and from the *lord* Jesus Christ, the son of the FATHER, in truth and love." 2 John 3.

" Grace be unto you, and peace, from HIM who is, and who was, and who is to come; and from the seven spirits*, who are before the throne—and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten from the dead,

From the Com. Prayer, &c.

us. O Christ hear us. Lord have mercy us. Christ have mercy upon

us. Lord have mercy upon us.—From our enemies defend us O Christ.

O son of David have mercy upon us. Graci-

ously hear us, O Christ; graciously hear us, O lord Christ." *Litany.*

" For thou only art holy, thou only art the lord: thou only, O Christ, with the holy ghost, art most high in the glory of God the Father." *Communion Service.*

" Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, and our God in three persons, father, son, and holy ghost, be honour and glory, dominion and praise, hence-

* This expression shews that this and the three preceding passages should be considered only as *pious wishes* and not *prayers*, for surely the writer would not pray to the seven spirits.

From the Scriptures.

and the prince of the
kings of the earth." Rev.
i. 4, 5. See also Rom.
xvi. 20, 24. 1 Cor. i. 3.
2 Cor. i. 2. xiii. 14.
Gal. i. 3. vi. 18. Eph.
i. 2. vi. 23. 24. Phil. i.
2. iv. 23. Col. i. 2. iv.
18. 1 Theff. i. 1. iii. 11.
12. v. 23, 28. 2 Theff.
i. 2. ii. 16, 17. iii. 5.
16, 18. 2 Tim. i. 2, 18.
iv. 22. Titus i. 4. iii.
15. Philem. iii. 25. Heb.
xiii. 20, 25. 1 Peter i. 2.
v. 10, 14. 2 Peter i. 2.
Jude 2. Rev. xxii. 21.

From the Com. Prayer, &c.

forth and forever. Amen."

— *Henry on Prayer.*

" — Through Jesus
Christ our lord ; to whom
with thee, O Father, and
thine holy spirit, be ever-
lasting praises." *Dod-*
dridge.

" Jesus, my God, thy
blood alone,
Hath power sufficient to
atone."

Watts, Ps. l. 51.

" To God the Father,
God the son,
And God the spirit, three
in one,
Be honour, praise and
glory given,
By all on earth and all in
heaven."

Watts's Doxology.

See also Ps. xix. long
metre, ver. 5, 6. ps. xlv.
c. cx. cxviii. &c.

" God the Father, God
the son, and God the holy
ghost, bless, preserve and
keep you." *Matrimony.*

BRETHREN, before I proceed, suffer me to ask you, if you have carefully considered the passages, which have been laid before you? Have you read them over with attention? Have you endeavoured to read them with impartiality? Have you prayed to almighty God, that he would not suffer you to be carried away by groundless prejudices—that he would open your eyes to his truth?

Brethren, it is no trifling matter. It is a very serious question, whether we be to worship one divine person, or three divine persons—one God, or three Gods. Have you, then, really perused the above contrast with that serious attention, which the subject calls for? I do not pretend to have produced every *prayer*, or *devout wish*, or *doxology* to be met with in the New Testament. But I believe there are but few, which are neither copied, nor referred to. One should hope you will not think it too much trouble to turn to those places in your bible, to which you are referred, and to those also, of which the words are given, that you may be satisfied one has quoted them fairly, and also selected such as are proper specimens of the whole.—Supposing that you have done this, and are satisfied; permit me to inquire, if you do not think, that there is a very striking difference between the scripture plan of worship, and the church of England plan*? Do you not think that the lord
Jesus

* Though the church of *England* only is expressly mentioned here, and in other places in this address;
yet

Jesus and his apostles prayed very differently from the members of our established church? Jesus and his apostles prayed to the FATHER, and to no other. He who is guided by the English liturgy, prays to God the Father, God the son, and God the holy ghost, to "the holy, blessed, and glorious trinity." The former worshipped *one* being: the latter worshipped *three* persons or beings†. The former, therefore, and those

yet the same observations which are made to shew that it is the duty of unitarians to leave *that* church, are generally applicable to trinitarian churches among the *dissenters*.

† When trinitarians assert that the Father is God, the son God, and the holy ghost God, they must mean that the terms father, son, and holy ghost, are three different *names* of the *same* being, or that they are expressive of *three distinct beings*. If they mean that they are only different *names* of the *same* being, it is difficult to see in what respect they differ from unitarians, except in using a language, which is very liable to be misunderstood. But if they mean that the terms Father, son, and holy ghost, are expressive of *three distinct beings*, each of whom is God, is it not undeniable that they assert the existence of THREE GODS? It is to no purpose for them to say, that they mean that there are three persons in the godhead; for still the question returns, What do you mean by the word person? Do you mean that there are three *names* belonging to the godhead? Or do you use the word *person*, as it is commonly used, to signify a distinct *being*, or intelligent agent?

those who follow their example, we may call "unitarians," the latter we may be allowed to term "trinitarians." Does it not also appear, as if the trinitarians paid religious adoration to a mortal man? For could God redeem us by his blood*? Could the eternal, unchangeable Jehovah, be *born*, be *circumcised*, be *baptized*, be *tempted*, be in an *agony* and *bloody sweat*, be *crucified* and *suffer*? Could the immortal ONE *die* and be *buried*†? And yet the Being, whom in the litany you address, is a Being of whom this is spoken. But surely no such being is worshipped in the holy scriptures. The only being there adored, is the King eternal, immortal invisible. Had our heavenly Father designed that we should worship a God the *son*, and a god the *holy ghost*, would he not have informed us of it in the bible? Had he designed that

* Neither Acts xx. 28. nor 1 John iii. 16. countenance an idea so shocking, for there is the greatest reason to believe that Luke wrote it, "Feed the church of the *lord*," i. e. of the lord Jesus; as it is thus quoted by the most antient christian writers. John probably wrote, Herein we perceive love, in that he, &c. (meaning Jesus.)

† The trinitarians, who address Jesus Christ in the language of the litany,—By the mystery of thy holy incarnation, &c. must address him as *man*, or as *God*. If as *God*, then they assert that God was born, bled, died, &c. If as *man*, then they coolly and deliberately pray to a mere mortal.

that we should worship a *trinity* of Gods, would the scriptures have been silent about it? That we must worship the *Father* is plainly declared. But we have neither precept, nor example, for going farther. On the contrary, Jesus declares, that we must worship the *Lord our God*, and serve *him only**; and whom he meant by the lord, appears plainly from his directing his disciples to pray, saying, "OUR FATHER, who art in heaven." May we not conclude then, that the worship of *two other* persons, is a merely human invention, and supported by merely human authority? But it is followed by the church of England. Upon this ground, I exhort you to leave the church of England—no longer to join in her religious services—no longer to countenance her unscriptural practices.

Worship the GOD of Jesus and his apostles---worship the GOD of the bible—worship *that* GOD according to the dictates of your consciences—Permit me to urge it upon you by the following considerations:

FIRST CONSIDERATION. *We ought to obey GOD rather than man.* Suppose that almighty GOD appeared to you, and said, "Thou shalt have no other GODS but ME, for I the Lord thy GOD am a jealous GOD." Suppose that a mortal man appeared next, and directed you to pray not only to GOD the Father, but to a God the son, and a God the holy ghost; should

* Matt. iv. 10.

should you hesitate which to obey? But what difference is it, whether the Almighty appear in person to you, or whether he inform you of his will by his holy messengers and prophets? What difference is it, whether one man or ten thousand men, stand up in opposition to him? The path of duty is equally plain in both cases. You cannot hesitate whom to obey: you cannot hesitate whose instructions to receive. Shall *they* be your guides, who direct and require you to pray to the Father, the son, and the holy ghost, or *he* who hath told us, that true worshippers must worship the FATHER?

It matters not on what grounds *men* propose their rules, or convert their sentiments into a law; whether they plead the honour of their redeemer; whether they infer their directions from the character he sustains; or whether they plead the practice of christians for several hundred years. If it appear to us that they prescribe what GOD hath not required, all that they can set before us, is to be considered as only *their* opinion, *their* deductions, *their* will; not GOD's word and will. Let them be ever so pious and learned, their injunctions are still only *human*: and the question returns, shall we hear men rather than GOD?

It matters not by how many, or how devoutly, certain invocations, prayers, and doxologies, are used: the great question is, are they countenanced by the new Testament? You see they are not. How then
can

can they be used without violating that reverence which we owe to GOD; without violating the plain authoritative directions which he hath given us? It deserves, christians, your claim and serious consideration, whether you can do this, and be blameless? Will you plead that you are actuated by love and reverence to the Lord Jesus, and by your sacred regards to the holy spirit? But what reverence and love is that, which induces you to deviate from the plan given by your great lawgiver? What sacred regards are those which lead you to set aside, or go beyond, the directions of the spirit of truth? Reverence and love may induce you to worship *Mary* and *all the saints*, as well as the *son* of *Mary*. The church of Rome hath as good a right to enjoin the worship of the former, as the church of England, or of Scotland, hath to enjoin the worship of the latter. Your obedience is as reasonable in one instance as in the other. Reflect, my friends, upon the case of the Jews. The first commandment was, "thou shalt have no other Gods but ME." But they worshipped idols. GOD, therefore, delivered them into the hands of their enemies. A great part of them were destroyed: the remainder of them were carried into captivity. But this brings me to the second consideration, which I meant to suggest to you.

SECOND CONSIDERATION. *It is our duty to beware of idolatry.* The apostle John concludes his first epistle with—"little children, keep yourselves from

from idols." But, is the worship (you will say) of the church of England idolatrous? Will the members of that church be excluded, as idolaters, from the kingdom of heaven? Far be it from me to say, concerning any article of faith, in the language of the abominable athanasian creed, "that except a man believe it he *cannot be saved, and without doubt shall perish everlastingly.*" You believe, I trust, that all sincere and virtuous roman catholics will be saved. But do you not think that they are chargeable with idolatry? where men are idolaters through ignorance, and can preserve their minds untainted by the bad influences of the practice, we may cheerfully embrace them as fellow-heirs of a common salvation. But still let us not forget that they are idolaters, and that if *we*, who enjoy more light than they, follow their example, we shall justly become objects of the divine displeasure. If it be idolatry, to worship any besides that Being who said, "thou shalt have no other Gods but ME;" if it be idolatry to worship GOD under a *bodily form*; how can they be exculpated from the charge of idolatry, who pray not only to GOD the *Father*, but to a GOD the *son*, and a GOD the *holy ghost*, and invoke the Almighty, by his *nativity and circumcision*, his *agony and bloody sweat*, his *cross and passion*, his *death and burial*. Whether the worshipping of three different persons, as three objects of adoration, and yet constituting but one GOD; whether the worshipping of a divinity who is himself his own *father*

C

and

and his own *son*, his own *sender* and his own *messenger*; whether the worshipping of the *immutable* and *eternal* Godhead, as having *changed* the mode of his existence, and compounded himself with the frail and mortal nature of man, on purpose that he might *die*; whether this be not a species of *idolatry*, unknown in ancient times, unaccountably monstrous and irrational, and repugnant to every *natural* feeling of an unprejudiced mind, I leave to your serious and candid consideration. It matters not that the holy Jesus is an object of this idolatry. Can you imagine it will be acceptable to *him*, “who sought not his own glory,”—“who did not his own will, but the will of him who sent him.”—and who replied to the person who addressed him with the appellation of *good master*, “why callest thou *me* good? there is none good but *one*, that is GOD.” Would you honour the son as you honour the Father? Pay *that* kind of honour to him which he required:—not religious adoration, but that *attention to his doctrines and commands*, to which he, and every messenger from heaven, is justly entitled. All due and grateful respect be rendered to the son of GOD, to the captain of our salvation: but I *dare* not give that religious homage and glory to the *son*, which I verily think, and am fully persuaded, ought to be given to the *Father only*.

It may be said, that the doctrine of the trinity is an harmless speculative opinion, and that the practice
which

which follows it can have no bad moral tendency. But it is hardly possible that any false notion concerning God can be perfectly innocent, and especially a notion so very false as this, viz. that divine worship should be paid to Jesus Christ, as a being, *the same in substance*, and equal in power and glory, *with the Father*. When it is apprehended, that instead of *one* there are *three* beings, to whom the perfections of deity are referred, the imaginations of men will always make a partition of divine attributes among them; and in no one of them will there be that union of venerable and amiable attributes, which we ascribe to *the one only true God*: and as the mind of man cannot contemplate more than one object at the same time; it cannot, with these notions, be possessed of that mixture of reverence and love, of which the sentiments of true devotion consist. From these principles it will follow, that while the *Father*, *son*, and *holy ghost*, are equally regarded as God, one of them will be thought to possess one set of attributes, and another a different set: one of them will be imagined to be of one disposition, and another of another; just as the heathens conceived of their several deities.

I appeal (says a great writer) to the conviction of the *athanasians* themselves, whether, in their ideas, there be not something more *stern* and *inflexible* in the character of the Father, than of the son: also, notwithstanding they ascribe divine attributes to the Fa-

ther, whether, leaving the son out of the question, something particularly amiable and engaging would not be wanting in what would remain of the divine Being ; and likewise, whether leaving out the Father and son, the *spirit* alone (according to their customary ideas of his nature and attributes, mercy and goodness) would be equal to the works of creation, providence, and redemption. If this be a just representation, there is nothing that the *athanasians* really conceive of as *one* being, to whom they ascribe all the divine perfections of justice, goodness, and mercy. The trinitarian doctrine must sometimes, therefore, be unfavourable to real goodness, by destroying the effects of those motives to virtue, which are derived from the imitation of GOD. For certainly it would not be to the advantage of any man's character to resemble GOD the *Father*, according to the ideas that some persons have of him ; ideas which they never could have entertained of him, if, by dividing the godhead, they had not divested him of some of his essential attributes.

Is it not then your duty, brethren, to abstain from a species of idolatry, which perverts your notions of the divine character, and has a natural tendency to corrupt your moral feelings ? If there be sin, if there be danger, in idolatry of any kind ; can you satisfy yourselves in a conduct, which supports idolatry ; which exposes you to the danger, and involves you in the guilt, of it ? Is this the line of conduct to be pursued

pursued by a sincere disciple of the lord Jesus? If you coolly and impartially consider the matter, you must be convinced it is not.—But let us proceed to the

THIRD CONSIDERATION. *It is not consistent with sincerity*, that an unitarian christian should take a part in any trinitarian worship. Did you certainly know that some who join in acts of public worship, believed in their heart that there is no God, or that he is not to be worshipped, nor will reward those who diligently seek him; would you not judge such persons as acting an inconsistent and insincere part; as contradicting their own convictions, and assuming false appearances? Could you regard them as *honest* men? Be persuaded then to reflect, how nearly your conduct resembleth theirs; if you continue to join in the worship of Beings, who, you are convinced, have no claim, on the authority of the scriptures, to such prayers and praises as are offered to them. Can you exculpate yourselves, in this case, from the charge of insincerity? Your conduct indeed is attended with circumstances which render your insincerity much more aggravated than that of the atheist. Believing in God, you must be convinced of your obligations to obedience, and cannot but know that you are forbidden to worship any but the Supreme Being.

If you be *unitarians*, do you in your *private* devotions pray to God the *son* and God the *holy ghost*?

C 3

No?

No : you feel, that, if you did, your hearts would upbraid you with insincerity. And will you dare in *public* to trifle with the Almighty, and with your own consciences ? If *any* actions should be clear and unequivocal, *those* should be so, which have a direct concern with the God of truth. The apostle, therefore, exhorted the temporizing disciples of old, to shun the feasts in honour of idols, lest they should be supposed to entertain a veneration for the idols. The christians of the following age refused to cast incense upon the altars of the heathen gods, fearing that this action would speak a language repugnant to the sentiments of their minds. They endured every torture, and patiently submitted to a cruel death, rather than by words or deeds contradict their convictions. Their example, my brethren, is well worthy of your imitation. Indeed, unless we do follow it, we shall have no right, at the conclusion of this mortal life, to comfort ourselves with the reflection, that “ in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.” There is nothing more diametrically opposite to the character of a true christian, than the great maxim of the heathen philosophers in former times, and of unbelievers in these, viz. *to think with the wise and act with the vulgar.* The true christian is a character that is all of a piece. What he believes, he openly professes and acts upon. He is studious to avoid even the appearance of evil,
and

and therefore dreads giving the least countenance to any system or mode of worship which in his own judgment he condemns. He fears God, and fears nothing else; and, *provided his own heart does not condemn him, he cares not what men may say of him, or do unto him.*

But perhaps it will be pleaded by some, that they do not repeat what they disapprove. Upon the same principle you may join in the religious services of any body of men upon earth. You may join in the worship of the church of *Rome*, in the worship of a mahometan or of a heathen assembly, and thus pass for a good *catholic* in France, a faithful *mussulman* in Turkey, and an honest *pagan* in Africa. And think one moment, whether that principle can be good, righteous, and eligible, which will admit you as well to be members of any superstitious and idolatrous church in the world, as of the church of England itself?

Suppose that a set of unenlightened heathens, zealous for the religion of their ancestors, should erect a temple in your neighbourhood, and consecrate it to the service of the gods of antiquity; should you think yourselves excusable in shunning christian assemblies, and bending your knee before the altar of Jupiter, of Venus, or of Bacchus?—Should you think it sufficient to justify your conduct, that you adopted no expression inconsistent with your real sentiments? Most certainly not. You would be shocked at the idea of such a conduct. You would think yourselves under

an

an indispenfible obligation to confine yourfelves to *that* worship which is more agreeable to your christian principles, to that temple in which your feelings would not be wounded, nor your devotions difturbed, by the addreffes of your fellow-worshippers to the deities of their imaginations. But, for the very fame reason, it behoves you to forfake the communion of the church of England, and join in the religious fervices of a fociety whose principles are more agreeable to your own: unlefs you think that the circumftance of its being eftablifhed by the *civil magistrate*, creates a diftinction, unlefs you think that the civil magistrate can change the very nature of right and wrong, and make that confiftent with integrity, which would otherwife be infincere and hypocritical.

Your attendance at the trinitarian place of worship, will lead others to imagine that you are trinitarians. Let me put a parallel cafe. Suppose there are two mufic-meetings in the town where you live, in one of which there is never any fong allowed, but what you are convinced is perfectly confiftent with religion and virtue; while in the other there are fome profane and indecent fongs mingled with the good? Suppose your fon voluntarily chofe to attend the latter, and there fhewed no diflike to the profanenefs and immodesty of the fongs, but feemed as much to join with thefe as with fuch as were innocent; would you not feverely reprove and condemn him, and imagine that he had too much love
for

for obscenity and impiety? And suppose he should tell you at home, that when he was at the music-meeting, and bore a part in the tunes, he either stopped when the indecent passages occurred, or else sung some other words; would you admit this as a sufficient excuse? Would you not insist upon it, that it was his duty, there, upon the spot, to publish his dislike, or rather to resolve to go thither no more? And would you not think that his *choosing* to avoid the innocent concert, and to frequent the vicious one, was a sign he was grown in love with profaneness and immorality? And would you not urge that his protesting against fact would not serve his turn? No more will *your* protesting against fact serve yours. Is there not all the *same* reason to condemn your practice, which is exactly like it? By taking a part in trinitarian worship, you virtually profess, in the face of all who see you do so, that you are trinitarians.—Unless your contradiction of this profession be as public as the action itself, you must, with regard to many, be acting the hypocrite. And, indeed, if it were possible, for you to caution all who witness your devotions, from considering you as trinitarians, there would be so glaring an inconsistency in your conduct, that you must expect the censure, if not contempt of the honest.

If you really look upon several passages in the liturgy to be contrary to truth, and to the holy scripture, and to contain in them contradictions and idolatry;

idolatry; is there not as much reason, that you should leave the communion of the church, as that your son should avoid profane music-meetings? Act a consistent part. Leave your hypocrisy. Dare not any longer to trifle with men and with a heart-searching God. Be not ashamed of the truth in an unbelieving and scoffing age. "Be faithful to death, and you shall inherit the crown of life*."—But consider, farther,

FOURTHLY. *Your obligations to the cause of truth and christianity.* Do you not look upon it as desirable, my unitarian friends, that the truth should be generally known and received? But how is it possible that this should ever be the case, if it be never *professed*? Do you think there would have been at this day any christians in the world, if all the disciples of Jesus, in the earlier ages, had contented themselves with a silent acquiescence in the truth of the gospel, whilst they regularly frequented the temples of idol gods? Do you imagine that there would have been any reformation two hundred years ago, had the first protestants never thought of withdrawing themselves from the communion of the church of Rome, nor of forming societies, whose religious services should be conducted more agreeably to the scripture plan? Can it be expected, then, that the doctrine of the *divine unity* should gain ground, whilst unitarians remain quietly

* See an Address to conforming arians, printed in 1735; reprinted, at Cambridge, in 1788.

quietly in a trinitarian church ? The experiment, however, has been tried. About an hundred years since, there was in England a body of very respectable unitarians. They were men of the best characters ; they were zealous for the truth ; but they did not see that duty called upon them to absent themselves from the established places of worship. The consequence was, that, upon their deaths, the doctrine of the unity of GOD was nearly lost in this country. Mr. Firmin, a most excellent unitarian christian of that period, became sensible towards the end of his life that they had acted upon mistaken and pernicious principles. He began to fear that the true idea of GOD would be lost among christians. He was painfully apprehensive, that unless unitarians formed themselves into distinct religious societies, the continual use of terms which, in their ordinary signification, are confessed by all to imply three Gods, would *paganize*, at some time, the whole christian church. The present flourishing state of the unitarian cause, is principally to be ascribed to the decisive and noble conduct of those honest men, who have withdrawn themselves from the established church, and sacrificed to truth and conscience every prospect of interest and emolument. Were all of you, my brethren, to imitate their example, it would be an effectual means of serving the cause of truth. But nothing short of your separation from every trinitarian society of christians, will be of any lasting avail.

There

There cannot be a plainer rule of life than this, that every man should do what he would wish others to do, and what he is convinced would be best, if all others would do. No man can tell what influence his own example may have to produce a good effect. Whatever comes of it, he by these means discharges his conscience, and (as far as following his duty in this instance can do it) *saves his own soul* *. Perhaps it would be the means of relieving from a heavy burden the mind of many a minister of the lord Jesus, who is convinced that the offices of the church are very distant from the principles of the gospel, but whose apprehensions of the distresses of poverty are a bar to his following the dictates of truth and conscience. Such would find congregations ready to receive them as their pastors. You would become their friends and patrons. What satisfaction would it yield you ; and how would you rejoice in the hope of sharing the rewards, as you had eased the trials of those righteous men, who nobly sacrificing every prospect of future advancement, and dignity, would readily put up with a scanty subsistence, rather than disobey the dictates of their consciences ! Would it not afford much greater satisfaction to your minds, than can ever result from your present course of conduct, which encourages in their hypocrisy those clergymen, who not only subscribe what they do not believe,

* See a Letter to a layman on the subject of Mr. Lindsey's proposal for a reformed church, p. 18.

believe, but utter every day what they must consider as impious falsehoods, in the form of a solemn address to almighty God. And can it be easy to you to be accessary to other men's sins; and, thus, to be, in some measure, the cause why *some perish, for whom Christ died!*

By continuing in communion with a trinitarian church, you not only do your part to prevent a reformation, but you essentially injure the cause of Christ, and take the most effectual step in your power to confirm and perpetuate the prejudices of unbelievers against the religion of Jesus. A clergyman (who had been a chaplain aboard a ship) writing to Mr. Whiston, says, "I was sorry that the turks, jews, &c. were so very much offended with the christian religion, upon these two accounts, viz. the one the worshipping of images, the other the belief and worship of the *trinity*, which seemed to them to be the belief of three Gods." La Compté's history of China speaks of the heathens, as deriding the christian doctrine of a *mortal* God, and upon that account considering christianity as *fabulous*. Dr. Caufabon says, that *this doctrine has kept more people from embracing the christian faith than any thing he knows of*. Mahomet, in his Koran, says, "It is long since the infidels (meaning the christians) have said that there are three Gods; certainly there is but one." Thus does the doctrine of the trinity prove a stumbling-block in the way of jews, mahometans, and heathens.

Nor is it to be wondered at, that some, even in this country, offended with the harsh sounds and irreconcilable principles of the established liturgy, forsake the assemblies of public worship, whilst others are prejudiced against christianity, and driven into infidelity. Will it not be a service to such, to set them an example of distinguishing between the gospel and the corruptions of it? Will it not afford them a fair opportunity to judge of its truth, if you exhibit it in its plain and native dress? Let them see what christianity is in *itself*. Your continued conformity misleads them, and contributes to keep out of sight the real and genuine gospel. Every error retained, obscures the light and glory of the gospel. Peculiarly pernicious, then, must be the influence of an error which beclouds the fundamental doctrine of revelation—the *unity* of God, and multiplies the objects of religious adoration.

ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS.

THOUGH the justness of this representation be acknowledged; it may be objected, perhaps, by some,

(FIRST OBJECTION.) *That it does not become common lay christians to busy themselves about a reformation, and that this matter ought to be left to the bishops and the rest of the clergy.*

But let me request such persons to remember, that the arguments and reasonings which have been
adopted

adopted in this address, apply to all orders of christians. Is not religion the concern of every man? Is it not the duty of every man to obey God? Does not every man worship God for himself? Is not integrity and sincerity required in every man? Is not the truth of the same importance to every man? Is not every man under an obligation to lay no stumbling-block in the way of the conversion and salvation of unbelievers? You may as well say, my friends, that the bishops and clergy are to be just, and charitable, and temperate, and pious, for you; and that it is no concern of yours to cultivate these virtues. But pray consider, that if you be not *good christians yourselves*, you cannot expect to be *saved* yourselves.

Besides, you have no reason to suppose that the bishops and clergy in general will ever promote a reformation. The reformation from popery in the sixteenth century, was brought about in opposition to most of the bishops and clergy. The church of England was placed upon its present footing in opposition to them. The bishops have always opposed any farther reformation to the utmost of their influence. Many unsuccessful attempts have been made to obtain their concurrence in advancing that and similar objects. It cannot be reasonably looked for in men whose rank, and wealth, and power, depend (or are supposed to depend) upon things continuing in their present state. It cannot be expected that

those clergymen who have conscientiously subscribed the articles, and approve the services of the church, should be friends to any material alteration. Even some who cannot but *wish* the reformation of many things, in so old and complex a system as that of the church, have discernment enough to foresee, that if a reformation should once begin, it will not stop where they would choose to have it; and it is but too plain, that they are absolutely bent upon retaining, at the hazard of perpetuating whatever themselves think wrong, many things which they are sensible cannot escape an inquiry, if an inquiry be encouraged. Like spiders in the center of an immense web, they feel at every extremity of it; fearing that if what seem to be only the *outworks* be demolished, the whole fabric will come to the ground*.

With you, therefore, my brethren, it lies to begin a reformation. You may not live to see the *completion* of it: but it will undoubtedly go on and be gaining ground every day. The heads of the church and state *must follow*, though they will not *lead*.

But to the conduct which has been pointed out, you may, perhaps, make a

SECOND OBJECTION, viz. *That there are many good things in the church services, and that you show your candour and charity in putting up with what you think amiss.*

Such

* Letter to a layman, p. 20.

Such a plea would equally excuse a concurrence in the worship of the church of Rome, from the liturgies* of which, these excellent things are borrowed. Besides, no mixture of truth can alter the nature of the errors blended with it; nor any ardour and elevation of spirit in some parts preserve us innocent in the use of those services, the leading sentiments of which are *sinful*. As to the *candour* and *charity* you wish to show, permit me to observe, that we ought to be greatly upon our guard, that we do not *impose* upon ourselves, by imagining that we possess and exercise a virtue, of which we have only the *appearance*. There is scarcely any thing more injurious to our religious character and conduct, than this *self-deception*. I fear it is too often the case, that those who persuade themselves that they are actuated by *candour* in attending statedly, or occasionally,

D 3

upon

* Even in the darkest times of popery, there was a variety of forms in different sees. That uniformity was not then known, which is now so rigidly insisted upon. The *act of uniformity of service*, which passed in the reign of Edward VI. in the year 1549, begins thus: "Whereas of long time there hath been had, in this realm of England, and in Wales, diverse forms of common prayer, commonly called the service of the church, that is to say, the use of Sarum, of York, of Bangor, and of Lincoln: and besides the same, now of late, much more diverse and sundry forms and fashions have been used in the cathedral and parish churches of England and Wales," &c.

upon the worship of the *established* church, never think of shewing their candour by joining in the religious services of some *little, mean, and despised sect*, and would really be *ashamed to be seen* in their poor and obscure conventicles. But, in truth, such persons totally mistake the nature and proper exercise of candour. Candour does not consist in the *sacrifice of principle*, in the *countenancing and supporting of error*, but in *meekly bearing with the sentiments of other people*, in *loving the men*, though we *reject their opinions*, and in entertaining just views of their character and future condition. You show no true candour and charity, then, in adopting the idolatrous worship of the church of England, or of any other church. When you publicly and uniformly show your detestation of that worship, you will afford yourselves an opportunity of testifying your charity towards those who conscientiously perform it. But you will, perhaps, state, as a

THIRD OBJECTION, *That you have some office, or employment, in the church, in the discharge of which you benefit the community.*

But do you really think that the service, which you render to your neighbourhood, is by any means equivalent to the injury you do to your own mind and to the cause of pure christianity? Will it by any means make up for your countenancing falsehood and idolatry, for your upholding the most glaring corruptions of the gospel, and bringing a discredit upon the

the christian religion? Do you really imagine that GOD stands in any need of your insincerity, wickedness and ruin, in order to accomplish his designs? *To do evil that good may come*, is an evil which Paul disclaims with abhorrence; and James says, that *if a man offend*, that is knowingly, wilfully and habitually offend, *in one point, he is guilty of all*.

No longer, then, support the grossest corruptions of christianity, no longer disguise the character and perfections of the almighty, no longer afford an occasion for the unbelief of the jew, or for the ridicule of the gentile. Profess the genuine gospel of Jesus; separate yourselves from an idolatrous church; protest against her errors; awaken the attention of men; excite them to inquiry; teach them to shake off that slavish reverence for public forms, and an established religion, which screens jargon, absurdity, and mysticism from a free examination. I address you as christians: I address you as persons who have learned to look not entirely at the things which *are seen and temporal*, but at things which are *unseen and eternal*; as persons who think it their duty to give some attention to the concerns of religion, as well as to the concerns of business. If you be disposed to obey GOD rather than *men*; if you have that holy dread of *idolatry*, which animated the primitive believers; if you be friends to that *simplicity* and *godly sincerity*, in which the apostle gloried; if you have *any love for the truth*; *any reverence for the gospel*, any regard

regard to the *salvation of mankind*; I am persuaded you will feel yourselves disposed to pay some attention to the thoughts which have now been submitted to your consideration. But there are always difficulties to be encountered in treading the path of duty, and especially *that* part of it, to which we have hitherto been strangers. Happy the man who is not discouraged by them from proceeding! Happy the man who has resolution and steadiness enough to encounter all, and to “press forward to the mark of “the prize of his high calling of GOD in Christ “Jesus!” Some discouraging thoughts are now, perhaps, presenting themselves to your minds, my friends. Be upon your guard, I pray you, that they have not more influence upon you than they deserve. Consider that if you be unitarians in principle, every suggestion which pleads in favour of your conformity to trinitarian worship, pleads in *opposition to your duty and your eternal interest*. One difficulty, and which, indeed, may be considered as an unanswerable objection to the conduct here recommended, is that

(FOURTH OBJECTION.) *There is no place of worship near you, in which GOD the Father only is worshipped.*

It is a most melancholy thought that this should be the case with any of you. But, alas! it must be acknowledged, that where there are even *dissenting* societies, there are frequently no *unitarian* ones, many dissenters being as firm trinitarians as any church-of-England

England man, and conducting their religious services in a manner equally repugnant to the feelings and principles of a conscientious worshipper of the *one, only living, and true* GOD. But when there is a dissenting society of unitarians, you ought, undoubtedly, to join them in preference to the church of England: for though you like a *liturgy* better than an *extempore* prayer; yet a matter of this kind ought never to be considered of so much importance as to make you sacrifice sincerity, truth, and the gospel cause. But if there be in your neighbourhood *no* unitarian place of worship of *any* kind, there is so much the greater call for your exertions. A clear, explicit, open, and decisive conduct is absolutely necessary, if you would serve the cause of GOD and of truth. If you would be the *only* man in your neighbourhood whose eyes almighty GOD has opened to the truth; still be persuaded to "flee from idolatry." If you make a point of conscience to devote the Sunday, or any other part of the week, to religious purposes, your conduct will soon be noticed, some persons will be led to inquire, and it *cannot* be long before you will meet with some, ready to join you in social worship upon a scriptural plan. A cause so good, *must* gain advocates, when it is properly understood. Nothing is wanting but *attention and inquiry*, and the truth will flourish. Let the steadiness of your conduct, added to the perfection of your character, excite that attention. As soon as you meet with any ready to join you

you in adoring the ONE GOD, you may enjoy all the comforts and advantages of social worship. You cannot imagine that it is *essential* to the utility and acceptibleness of social worship, that *numbers* should be assembled together in a house devoted to the purpose, and with all the attendants of a minister regularly educated, and other officers.

In the first ages of christianity we read of *churches* that did not extend beyond the circle of a family, as the church in Nympha's house*, and that in the house of Philemon, &c. It cannot admit of a doubt whether it be not preferable to worship the only true GOD with one's *family only*, agreeably to the scriptures, and in the language of sincerity and truth, than to join the largest society with every circumstance of state, convenience and splendor, in a worship which the scriptures forbid, and our hearts disapprove. You will find it more easy to put such a plan into execution than you might at first imagine. Of useful sermons there is a great variety, such as Tillotson's, Secker's, Balguy's, Jortin's, Lardner's, Bourne's, Holland's, and Priestley's.—You will be well able to conduct the devotional services, with the assistance of Mr. Lindsey's reformed liturgy, of that used at Salisbury†, or of Dr. Priestley's forms of prayers, and

* Col. iv. 15.

† There is also a valuable one lately published, at the new unitarian chapel in Manchester, as well as a copious collection of psalms and hymns printed at Birmingham.

and other offices, for the use of unitarian societies. In these publications you will find services for the lord's supper and for baptism, which it is unreasonable to suppose can be conducted properly by none, but a regular ordained minister, for nothing of this kind is intimated in the new Testament.

By thus maintaining a noble independence and consistency of conduct in all your religious concerns, you will improve and confirm your own character; you will be an honour to the cause you espouse; you will render essential service to mankind, and be enabled to look forward with pleasure to the great day of retribution. You and your fellow labourers in the cause of God, will be like a *city set upon a hill*: you will be the means of disseminating, far and wide, the principles of true christian worship, and of diffusing a spirit of serious and rational zeal.

But, perhaps, you will start another difficulty, viz. that

(FIFTH OBJECTION.) *You have reason to expect a violent opposition to your separating from the church, on the part of your nearest friends and connections.*

Your case is undoubtedly to be pitied. But possibly your fears lead you to imagine that they will carry their resentment much farther, than there is any just ground for fearing they will. When they see that you act upon *principle*, that the favour and approbation of God is the grand motive of your conduct, and that you are *steady* in what you esteem to be the path of duty; their resentment will probably

bably be softened, and their confidence and affection towards you, will gradually revive. Indeed, the mere circumstance of your dissent being an *old* thing, (as it must in time become) will naturally wear off that *dread* towards it, which was felt at first: and they will at length perceive and acknowledge, that it has not made you such a *strange being* as they imagined it would. At any rate the line of duty is clear. Your hardships will be no greater than those which our lord laid it down as absolutely necessary that his first followers should endure, than those which were often experienced by the reformers of the sixteenth century, or than those which every faithful disciple of Jesus will be ready to undergo, when called to them in the course of duty. “He that loveth father or mother more than me (saith our lord) is not worthy of me. He that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all which he hath, his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.” May God give you grace to act up to your christian profession!

But some perhaps will say,

(SIXTH OBJECTION.) *I cannot bear to be so singular, as to leave the church in which I have been educated, especially if it be necessary to make my house a place of social worship.*

But let such persons consider, that the greater the effort, the greater will be the *merit*, and that where
duty

duty is concerned, all other considerations, be their weight greater or less, ought to be postponed to it. We christians ought to be thankful that we have nothing more difficult to encounter. What should we have done in the day of adversity, if we cannot bear prosperity? And it ought not to be forgotten, that none will be distinguished by our great master as his worthy disciples and followers, but those who shall be ready to risk and even to abandon every thing in the world, and even to *take up their cross* for the sake of his gospel. Every situation and circumstance of things, has its peculiar difficulties, which wise and conscientious men will lay their account with meeting, and be prepared to bear. This, in fact, must be done by every person who does not adopt the principle of universal *conformity to the world*, and who will not make his religion subservient to it. But what will such religion do for a man, when the world and all the follies and vanities of it, shall be no more*?

It is *your* professed faith as christians, that assuredly as the great author of our religion, the ambassador of truth and grace, has already appeared in the world, he will be revealed from heaven, to raise his sincere disciples to glory and immortality. How will all the great and splendid things of life disappear before the brightness of his coming! Is there need of more than one moment's calm reflection to convince you, that then the only thing of consequence will be the appro-
bation

* Preface to Forms of prayer, &c.

bation of his Father and our Father, of his God and our God? And can we really entertain the serious and rational hope of it, merely because we have professed his religion, whilst we have joined with the *many* to countenance, and with the *great* to support the corruptions of it? Will it be then a valid plea, that *fashion* and *interest* suffered us to depart from his laws, to act inconsistently with our own convictions, and obey *men* rather than God? Conceive how your minds would be affected, were the awful appearance of the judge, an event which you had grounds to look for, within a few days; were the heavens to open, and you to see him coming in the clouds, in whom you believe as the guide to eternal life—him who declared that the “true worshippers will worship” “the FATHER in spirit and in truth”—him who was himself “the faithful and true witness,” and died “leaving us an example to follow his steps”—him who hath warned us, that “whosoever loveth father or mother more than him, is not worthy of him”—him who hath laid it down as a certain principle, that his true disciples are not of the world! It is left to your own minds to imagine, how a conduct formed from a deference to the example and authority of *worldly men*, or from the views of profit and greatness, will appear to such a judge, and to *your own hearts*, when summoned to his tribunal, and to receive according to your works.

You believe the christian religion to be true. Believing it to be true, can you doubt the propriety of
my

my laying these considerations before you, or resist the force of them? You cannot but believe that the great founder of your faith will verify all his declarations: and then what will be the state of those who have regarded the *world* and what it can offer, more than *his word* and promises? Can you look forward to their situation without fear, without solicitude to escape the shame and disgrace of it? These expectations are sufficient to expose the weakness and folly of being captivated by the pomps and emoluments, enslaved by the authority, or ensnared by the fashion, of any religious establishment whatsoever. These are things which will all vanish away as airy phantoms. But truth, fidelity to GOD, and integrity of character, are things of lasting excellence and worth, of essential importance on that day which will try all things: everlasting honours await them; they will draw after them, in the final issue, stability, glory, and life for evermore.

It is but a short time before we shall find the truth of these things: they should therefore affect our minds, and influence our conduct, as if they were to be immediately revealed. "It is but a short time that we have, any of us, to abide here; and therefore we should lose no opportunity of bearing our testimony to the truth of God."

Whatever be your circumstances, dread joining, with your enlightened and informed minds, in *unscriptural, insincere, and idolatrous* worship, remembering

the words of the lord Jesus, that the FATHER seeketh such to worship him, as “ worship him in *spirit* “ *and in truth* :” and “ thou shalt love the LORD “ THY GOD, and him ONLY shalt thou serve.”

Dread also that awful voice from heaven, respecting all antichristian corruptions of the gospel in figurative Babylon : “ Come out of her, my people, that “ ye be not partakers of her sins, that ye receive not “ of her plagues.”

That you may be daily growing in grace ; that you may act with the firmness of men, with the seriousness and consistency of christians, is the sincere prayer of

Your affectionate friend,

and brother in the lord Jesus.

Dec. 12, 1789.

TEXTS OF SCRIPTURE ILLUSTRATED.

IT is the opinion of many learned men, that in the following passages, among others, the translators of our present English bible have made considerable mistakes.

Isaiah ix. 6. is rendered by ancient and many modern interpreters, "His name shall be called wonderful, counsellor, the strong, the mighty, the father of the age." An examination of Mr. Robinson's plea, p. 39. See also Mr. Coulthurst's blunders exposed, by W. Friend, M.A. No. 1.

Acts vii. 59. The word *God* is not in the original.

Acts xx. 28. In the best and most ancient manuscript copies of the new Testament, it is "feed the church of the lord, which he hath purchased with his blood," not *God*. See Friend, No. 5.

Rom. ix. 5. might be translated "whose (i. e. the Israelites) are the fathers, and of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came: God who is over all be blessed for ever, Amen." See Friend, No. 2, or Clarke's Scripture doctrine.

1 Cor. i. 2. should be translated (say some learned critics) "with all that, in every place, are called by the name of Jesus Christ our lord." Two dissertations, by T. Lindsey, M.A. p. 95, &c.

Phil.

Phil. ii. 6. would have been more justly translated, "who, being in the form of God, thought not the being like to God a thing to be greedily seized by him; but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself," &c.—Examination of Robertson, p. 76. See Le Clerc's Supplement to Hammond.

Heb. i. 8. should rather be rendered, "but concerning the son, he saith, God is thy throne for ever and ever," that is, God is the support of thy throne, &c. See Pierce on the Hebrews.

1 Tim. iii. 16. It is doubtful whether we should read "*God* was manifest," or, "*which* was manifest." In our first English version, it is thus rendered, and openli it is a greet sacrament of pitee, that thing that was, schewide in fleischè, it is justified in spirit, it apperide to aungels, it is prechide to hethene men, it is beleevd in the world, it is taken up in glorie." Frend, No. 5.

1 John iii. 16. Most copies, omitting the word *God*, read this verse thus, "Herein perceive we love, in that he laid down his life for us." Christie's Discourses, p. 253. and Benson on the place.

1 John v. 7, 8. should read thus, "For there are three that bear record, the spirit, the water, and the blood, and these three agree in one." The words [*in heaven, the Father, the word, and the holy ghost, and these three are one, and there are three that bear*
witness

witness in earth] have never been proved to be in ANY greek manuscript, before the invention of printing; nor were ever cited by any of the numerous writers in the whole arian controversy, concerning the trinity, in the fourth century. In the English bibles in the reign of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. they were printed in a *different character*, to signify their being wanting in the original. See Emlyn's Inquiry into the authority of 1 John v. 7. Remarks on Mr. Travis, in Commentaries and essays, vol. i. and Mr. Capel Löff's Answer to Dr. Knowles.

Rev. i. 11. The words [*I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last*] were probably not written by the author of the book, as they are said to be wanting in all the best manuscript copies. Examination of Robinson, p. 27.

Those who wish to see what is said in vindication of these deviations from our common English translation of the scriptures, may consult the books above referred to. They will find more upon the same subject in the "Catechist; or an inquiry into the doctrine of the scriptures concerning the one true God;" price 2s. or in the "Sequel to an apology on resigning the vicarage of Catterick:" both by the Rev. Mr. Lindsey. Many valuable criticisms will likewise be found in "A defence of the unity of God," by Mr. Clarke, an attorney at Uxbridge.—The unitarian doctrine is supported in a masterly manner, in "Discourses on the divine unity," by W. Christie, jun.

jun. merchant, of Montrose, a gentleman who has pursued the course of conduct recommended in the above address, conducting the religious services of a newly raised society, whose professed object is to worship the only one true God.

Should it be said, that as it is impossible for unlearned christians to judge of the authenticity of a passage, or of the proper translation of it, they ought to trust to our English bible; I would ask why they must trust to our common version rather than to any other? Were the authors of it any thing more than fallible men? Did they excel all other learned persons in knowledge; or were they more free from prejudice? If not; why may they not confide in other men of learning and integrity as well as in them? That the common translation is very imperfect, and that a more correct one is highly desirable, has been repeatedly acknowledged by the most competent judges both in and out of the church.

But though it is out of the power of unlearned christians to decide concerning the propriety of any translation of a text, from an acquaintance with the original languages; yet as they are able to perceive what the *general strain* of scripture is upon any particular point, they must conclude that the probability is that those translators are right, who make the scripture consistent with itself. If an unlearned person find, for instance, that the scripture uniformly teach us, that there is but one God—that they never cau-
tion

tion us against so understanding this, as to exclude a trinity of persons—that Jesus is usually spoken of, as the son of man—that he uniformly prayed to the Father, as the Being upon whom he entirely depended—is it not natural and reasonable for them to adopt those translations of doubtful texts which do not make such texts contradict a variety of plain and unequivocal passages? If they admit that the scriptures are consistent with themselves, they must either do this, or else interpret those few texts which seem to be repugnant to the general tenor of scripture in a different sense from what the words seem at first sight to convey. And indeed this is sometimes necessary when no disputed doctrine is concerned.

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND,
AND TO
PROTESTANT TRINITARIANS
IN GENERAL,
EXHORTING THEM TO TURN FROM
THE FALSE WORSHIP OF
THREE PERSONS,
TO THE WORSHIP OF
THE ONE TRUE GOD.

“Ye worship ye know not what.” John iv. 22.

[Re-printed from the second edition, 1788.]

AN ADDRESS
TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND.
AND TO
PROTESTANT TRINITARIANS
IN GENERAL.

BRETHREN,

PERMIT me to address you on a subject of the greatest importance to a sincere believer in Christ. I observe that many of you, every seventh day, frequent some place set apart for religious worship. You there profess to offer up prayers to the Being who created the world. Whatever may be the laws or customs of your different places of worship, you presume that they are founded on the holy scriptures. Any thing contrary to those scriptures, ought not, you think, to be admitted into your worship. Surely then it behoves you, at all times, to examine your opinions, to see whether you are really and truly worshipping the true God, the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, or a phantom of your own imaginations.

Are you then worshippers of God or not? It is a serious question. Let me persuade you to give it a moment's consideration. The words which Christ used, in answer to a Jewish inquirer after the first commandment of the law, may assist you in your thoughts. "Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment*." I bring you to this test; do you really worship that God, of whom Christ speaks, or do you not? If you do not, Christ himself bears witness against you, that you are not his disciples. To know whether you do, or do not, despise your favour, you must consider who God is, of whom Christ speaks.

Before I examine this point, let me observe to you what I have seen, or heard, in your places of worship. In the established churches, a form of prayer is used, in which are the following words; —O God the son, redeemer of the world—O God the holy ghost—O holy, blessed, and glorious trinity, three persons and one God, have mercy upon us miserable sinners—O lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us; and, in many similar passages, prayers are addressed to Jesus Christ, to the holy ghost, and to the trinity. In most also of the places of worship belonging to the dissenters, prayers are offered up to Jesus Christ, to the holy ghost, and to the trinity.

Now,

* Mark-xii. 29.

Now, brethren, if Jesus Christ be not God, if the holy ghost be not God, if the trinity be not God, you are guilty of a breach of Christ's commandments in praying to them; and if you pray to all these, you err grievously, for Jesus Christ tells us, that "the Lord our God is one Lord;" to which great truth Moses, the prophets, and the apostles, bear witness. You worship, alas! other gods than the true God, forgetting what is said in the scriptures, "Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them."

Of whom then did Christ speak? the words are taken from Deut. 6th chap. 4th ver. and, literally translated, are, "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." Jehovah is the name by which God made himself known to Moses; Jehovah created the heavens and the earth; Jehovah called Abraham—spake to Moses---revealed himself to the prophets---was worshipped by the Jewish nation. Throughout the whole of the old Testament, Jehovah declares himself to be one, and that there is no other God beside him: the children of Israel, while they obeyed him, worshipped him as the one and only true God; and when they mixed with the worship of Jehovah that of idols, they were brought to their senses by severe punishments. When Christ preached to the Jews, Jehovah was the object of their worship; of him also Christ bears witness, namely, that Jehovah is the only true God, that there is no one good but him,

him*, that he is his God and Father†, that Jehovah his Father is greater than he‡.

These few passages of scripture are, I should think, sufficient to convince an unprejudiced mind, that they, who offer up prayers to Jesus Christ, to the holy ghost, or to the trinity, are highly criminal : but since you have formed for yourselves, without any grounds from scripture, such fanciful gods, let us consider each of them separately.

First. Of *Jesus Christ*. Jesus Christ, says an apostle to the Jews, “ was a man approved of God “ among you by miracles, and wonders, and signs, “ which God did by him, in the midst of you, as ye “ yourselves also know : him, being delivered by the “ determined counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye “ have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified “ and slain : whom God hath raised up, having loosed “ the pains of death ||.” Again, “ this Jesus hath “ God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses § :--- “ and therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, “ whom ye have crucified, both lord and Christ ¶.”

I have selected these passages out of many others, because they give a plain account of our saviour. There is a clear distinction between God and Christ, Christ performed wonders, but it was by the power of God

* Matt. xix. 17.

† John xiv. 21.

‡ Acts ii. 32.

† Matt. xi. 25. John xx. 17.

|| Acts ii. 22.—24.

¶ Acts ii. 36.

God---by God's permission, he was delivered into the hands of the Jews and slain---it was God that raised up Christ from the dead---it was God that made him lord and Christ.

How then say ye, in exprefs contradiction, to scripture, and to common sense, that Jesus Christ is God; making no difference between the great Being who sent---and the man who was sent---between him who knoweth all things, and the man who declared, that he did not know all things*---between him, who is the God and Father of Jesus Christ, and that same Jesus, who declared that his Father was greater than he †!

Consult common sense. Could God lie in the womb of a woman? Could God expire on the cross? Could God be buried in the grave? Shocking suppositions! Brethren, examine for yourselves. Let no man deceive you, by a specious humility, to give worship to any, but the one true God, for "thou shalt worship him alone ‡."

Secondly. Of the *holy ghost*. Our forefathers supposed, and, at the present day, ignorant people in many countries suppose, that a man consists of two different substances; one, which we can see and feel; the other, a substance not to be felt. When a man died, they supposed that these two substances were separated one from the other. The body was conveyed to the ground; and the ghost, for so they called the other

* Matt. xxiv. 36. † John xiv. 28. ‡ Matt. iv. 10.

other substance, hovered about the place. Hence a number of idle tales are told about ghosts in church-yards; and it was said of a man dying, that he gave up the ghost. The papists have not failed to make use of this foolish tale to very bad purposes, for they say, that the ghost is tormented for many years, in a place called by them "purgatory." The greek word in the scriptures, which means "spirit," or "wind," or "breath," is frequently translated by this word "ghost." But wherever it is so translated, it is applied to God, in the same manner, as the spirit of a man is to a man. When you say, such a man's spirit is gentle or untameable, you do not mean, that the man and his spirit are different persons. Neither ought you, when speaking of God, to say, that God and his spirit are different persons. Your addresses to the holy ghost have no foundation in scripture, and they are strictly prohibited by the first commandment, "thou shalt have none other gods but me."

Thirdly. Of the *trinity*. Trinity is a latin word, not to be found in the scriptures. The notion, annexed to it in your creed, of three persons, each of whom is God, making but one God, is rank nonsense. And will you, my brethren, enter into the presence of God, pretend to worship him, and yet give him a name, the invention of idle and wicked disputers. Reflect—there is but one God, and his name is one, and his glory will he not give to another.

Perhaps you will reply to me, that I have selected those passages only, which favour my opinion, and have

have neglected others, which prove Jesus Christ to be God. It is sufficient for me to observe, that the scripture cannot contradict itself. The passages, by which you have been deluded (and I also once was deceived, through the prejudices of birth, of education, and of habit) to believe Christ to be God, will be found, on examination, to convey no such meaning. Search the scriptures. Point out one single passage, in which Jesus Christ declared himself to be God. Point out one, in which the apostles declared him to be God. In a matter of such importance, it is not proper for you, to infer from this or that passage, ill explained, that he is God: but as he expressly declares himself to be inferior to God, believe his words; and, as he commands, worship the Father, in spirit and in truth.

Perhaps you will say, that many pious and learned men have died in your faith. Such men are also to be found among catholics, among heathens. Yet you will not say, that the romish religion is true, or that idols are to be worshipped.

Perhaps you think it sufficient to follow, without inquiry, the religion of your fathers. Had your fathers in succession done the same, what would now be the religion of this country? Three centuries ago, they were immersed in ignorance and popery; some centuries farther back, they were gross idolaters. On this principle, Jesus Christ and his apostles would have had no hearers. Be not deceived, brethren; religion
is

is a personal concern—the bible is open before you—from thence you are to form your opinions, not from the notions of your fathers, or the customs of the times.

Perhaps you will say, you are ignorant, and these things are mysteries. Brethren, to whom did Christ preach? Was it not to the poor? Was it not to the unlearned? Were not his disciples from the lowest of the people? Did the great men, did any of the rulers, or the pharisees, believe on him*? The present times are like those in which Christ preached. The rich and learned are not more likely to become his disciples now, than formerly. As to the mysteries you talk of, remember that mystery means something hidden; revelation means the discovery of that, which was hidden, and unknown†. There are no mysteries in the religion of Jesus Christ: his gospel is plain, simple, and clear. Even the “mystery of iniquity,” which began to work in the apostle’s time, and now works, and keeps in bondage the nations of Europe, is sufficiently known, to every inquiring mind.

You will say, perhaps, that by adopting my notions of the true God, you will lose the benefit of social worship. The seven thousand men, who refused to bend their knees to Baal, did not, you may be sure, worship in the temples of Baal. Social worship is a very desirable thing: but for the sake of social prayer, I cannot worship an idol. Brethren, I call

* John vii. 48.

† Mark iv. 22. Col. i. 26.

call you from false objects of worship, to the worship of the living God. If any one, who reads this address, believes with me, that there is one God only, the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, I call on him to forsake the temples, where they have set up other objects of worship. To the rest, I say, with the apostle, examine yourselves, prove your own selves, whether you be in the faith? and if your inquiry leads you to this great truth, that the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ is the only true God, I say to you, with the scriptures,

WORSHIP HIM ALONE.

W. FREND.

Jesus College, Cambridge,
Sept. 10, 1788.

A SE-

call you from this object of worship to the worship
of the living God. It is one who sees this ad-
dress before us with you, that there is one God only,
the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I call
on him to bestow the blessing upon this assembly
and objects of worship. The gift of the Holy Spirit
and the word of God, which is the power of God,
which is the life of the world, and the joy of the
angelic host, and the glory of the Father of our
Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. I pray for you and
your families. Amen.

WILLIAM L. JONES.

WILLIAM L. JONES.

WILLIAM L. JONES.

A SECOND ADDRESS

TO THE

MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND,

AND TO

PROTESTANT TRINITARIANS
IN GENERAL,

“ We worship the Father, in spirit and in truth: for
the Father seeketh such to worship him.”

John iv. 23.

[Re-printed from the second edition, 1789.]

A SECOND ADDRESS
TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND,
AND TO
PROTESTANT TRINITARIANS
IN GENERAL.

BRETHREN,

I TOOK the liberty of exhorting you, in a former address, to turn from the fanciful gods, which, through false notions of scripture, you worship in the place of the one true God, the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ. I shall now shew you more fully from scripture, that the God and Father of Jesus Christ is the only true object of worship; proving it to you from the express commands of our saviour, his own practice, and that of his apostles.

I need not premise to you, brethren, that the command and practice of our lord and saviour ought to be the guide of your actions. You profess to believe in Christ; you are therefore bound to obey him. Let us then first examine what he says respecting the object of our worship.

Our saviour, in his excellent sermon on the mount, and again, on the request of his disciples to be instructed how to pray, gives us a plain rule on this subject : “ After this manner, therefore, pray ye, Our Father, who art in heaven*.” No precept can be clearer ; and it is repeated frequently, with promises, that the Father would hear their prayers. “ But thou when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father, who is in secret ; and thy Father who seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly†. Verily, verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he will give it you‡. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any, that your Father also, who is in heaven, may forgive you your trespasses§. If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children ; how much more shall your Father, who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him||. Again, I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth, as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, who is in heaven¶”.

Our saviour, indeed, had no idea of any other object of worship besides the true God, and quotes a passage

* Matth. vi. 9. Luke xi. 2. † Matth. vi. 6.

‡ John xvi. 23. John xv. 16. § Mark xi. 25.

|| Matth. vii. 11. Luke xi. 13. ¶ Matt. xviii. 19.

passage from the writings of Moses, who expressly commands the jews not to bow down to any other. Our saviour says, "Get thee hence, Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*." To the samaritan woman he saith, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father, in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him †."

If we attend to the practice of Jesus Christ, we shall find it agreeing with his precepts, and that he addressed himself always to the same Being, "his Father and our Father, his God and our God ‡."

"I thank thee, O Father, lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight ||. Father, I thank thee, that thou hast heard me §. And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God ¶. These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come, glorify thy son, that thy son also may glorify thee **." Read attentively the whole of

A 3

" this

* Matth. iv. 10. Luke iv. 8.

† John iv. 23.

‡ John xx. 17.

|| Matth. xi. 25. Luke x. 21.

§ John xi. 41. compare John xii. 7, 28.

¶ Luke vi. 12.

** John xvii. 1.

“ this prayer, it is a model for your own prayers ;
 “ our saviour begins with an address to the Father,
 and repeats the same frequently, saying, O Father—
 Holy Father—O righteous Father. What absurdities do not the trinitarians make of this excellent prayer, when they talk of their God the son—their God the holy ghost—their God, the holy, blessed, and glorious trinity.

Our saviour continued to his death in this true and proper mode of worship, the only one acceptable to the supreme being. “ O my Father, if it be possible,
 “ let this cup pass from me ; nevertheless, not as
 “ I will, but as thou wilt*. Father, forgive them :
 “ for they know not what they do †. My God, my
 “ God, why hast thou forsaken me ‡. Father, into
 “ thy hands I commend my spirit ||.”

From the precept of our saviour illustrated by his own practice, we conclude that the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ is the only object of worship ; and in this opinion we are strengthened by the precepts and general practice of the apostles.
 “ They continued daily with one accord, in the
 “ temple, praising God §. When they heard, they
 “ lifted up their voice to God and said, Lord, thou
 “ art

* Matth. xxvi. 39, 42. Mark xiv. 36. Luke xxii. 42.

† Luke xxiii. 34. ‡ Matt. xxvii. 46. Mark xv. 34.

|| Luke xxiii. 46.

§ Acts ii. 46, 47. compare iii. 8, 9. x. 2. 31, 33.
 xvi. 14.

“ art God, who hast made heaven and earth, the
 “ sea, and all that in them is—for, of a truth, against
 “ thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both
 “ Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the gentiles and
 “ the people of Israel, were gathered together—and
 “ now, Lord, behold their threatnings, and grant
 —that signs and wonders may be done in the name
 “ of thy holy child Jesus*. But prayer was made,
 “ without ceasing of the church, unto God for
 “ him†. Sirs, why do ye these things. we also are
 “ men of like passions with you, and preach unto
 “ you that ye should turn from these vanities unto
 “ the living God, who made heaven and earth, and
 “ the sea and all things that are therein‡? He took
 “ bread, and gave thanks to God, in the presence
 “ of them all§.”

You may object, perhaps, that there is an instance
 to the contrary in the deacon Stephen, who, on the
 point of death, called out, “ Lord Jesus, receive my
 “ spirit||.” But you are to recollect the particular
 circumstances in which he then was, that he saw Jesus
 Christ himself in glory, and seeing him, made, with
 great propriety, this address. If any of you, my
 brethren,

* Acts iv. 24, 27, 29, 30.

† Acts xii. 5. xi. 18. xvi. 25.

‡ Acts xiv. 25. xxvi. 20. compare attentively the
 three speeches of St. Paul, xvii. 23.

§ Acts xxvii. 35. xxviii. 15.

|| Acts vii. 59. compare Matth. viii. 25, xiv. 30.

brethren, should see our saviour in the same circumstances, such an address would be very proper.

The precepts of the apostles, in their letters, point out only one object of worship. “ Now I
 “ beseech you, brethren, for the lord Jesus Christ’s
 “ sake, and for the love of the spirit, that ye strive,
 “ together with me, in your prayers to God for me*.
 “ Be careful for nothing, but, in every thing, by
 “ prayer and supplications, let your requests be made
 “ known unto God†. If any of you lack wisdom,
 “ let him ask of God, who giveth to all men libe-
 “ rally‡. Giving thanks always unto God, even the
 “ Father, in the name of our lord Jesus Christ§.
 “ By him, therefore, let us offer the sacrifice of
 “ praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our
 “ lips, giving thanks to his name||. Now the God
 “ of patience and consolation grant you to be like-
 “ minded one towards another, according to Jesus
 “ Christ, that ye may, with one mind, glorify God,
 “ even the Father of our lord Jesus Christ¶.”

To these precepts, their practice also was conformable. “ Wherefore, I also cease not to give
 “ thanks for you, making mention of you in my
 “ prayers, that the God of our lord Jesus Christ,
 “ the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit
 “ of

* Rom. xv. 30. xii. 1. † Phil. iv. 6. Col. iii. 17.

‡ Jam. i. 5. 17.

|| Heb. xiii. 25.

§ Eph. v. 20. 1 Cor. x. 31.

¶ Rom, xv. 5. 6.

“ of wisdom*. For this cause I bow my knees unto
 “ the Father of our lord Jesus Christ†. Brethren,
 “ my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel is,
 “ that they might be saved‡.”

Their doxologies, as they are called, or forms of giving praise and glory to God, point out equally the same object of worship, the God of our lord Jesus Christ. “ Now unto him that is of power to establish you according to my gospel, and preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began:—To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ, for ever, Amen§. Blessed be God, even the Father of our lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort||. Now unto the king eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory, for ever and ever, Amen¶. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever*. Now the
 “ God

* Eph. i. 15, 16, 17. Phil. i. 3. iii. 3. 2 Theff. i. 3, 11, 12.

† Eph. iii. 14. Col. i. 3. iv. 3. 1 Theff. i. 2, 9.

‡ Rom. x. 1. i. 8, 9. 2 Cor. xiii. 7. 1 Cor. i. 4.
 2 Tim. i. 3.

§ Rom. xvi. 25, 27. Eph. iii. 20.

|| 2 Cor. i. 3. ii. 14. Eph. i. 3. 1 Pet. i. 3.

¶ 1 Tim. i. 17. vi. 16. Phil. iv. 20.

“ God of peace, that brought again from the dead
 “ our lord Jesus Christ, that great shepherd of the
 “ sheep, through the blood of the everlasting cove-
 “ nant, make you perfect unto every good work, to
 “ do his will, working in you that which is pleasing
 “ in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be
 “ glory for ever†.”

Such, my brethren, are the scripture forms—and now let me ask you, where are yours to be found? Not in scripture, I assure you, but in mass-books, in prayer-books established by authority, in decrees of popes and councils, and in acts of parliament. Are mass-books, decrees of popes and councils, or acts of parliament, the laws of christians? I detest and abjure them all; for neither the pope nor council, nor king, nor bishop, nor synod, nor parliament, have power to impose any form whatever, much less their impious forms on christians. I myself have indeed obeyed these things. I have been a servant of antichrist: but I thank God, even the God and Father of our lord Jesus Christ, that he has enabled me to tear from my forehead the accursed mark. In matters of religion, I declare myself the subject of Jesus Christ alone; in civil matters I am the subject of the civil magistrate, whom, according to the scriptures, I willingly obey.

Is

* 1 Pet. v. 10, 11. compare 2 Cor. ix. 10. &c. Rom. xi. 36.

† Heb. xiii. 20, 21. Rom. xv. 13. 2 Tim. iv. 18. 1 Pet. iv. 11.

Is it not astonishing, brethren, that, notwithstanding the variety of excellent forms in the new Testament, many of your clergy and ministers should adopt a form equally repugnant to scripture and to common sense; it is usual for them to add at the close of their sermons, "now to God the Father, God the son, and God the holy ghost, be ascribed, as is most due, all honour and glory, now and for ever." Thus they scruple not to offend the majesty of heaven, and instead of obeying the scriptures, they follow the vain traditions of men.

Brethren, I speak plainly to you, because I lament the state into which you are fallen. I would exhort you to turn from your wicked errors, and to read with attention the words of Christ and his apostles. There are passages, it is certain, in your Testament ill-translated, but an honest mind cannot fail of coming to the truth, if he compare scripture with scripture; but if you are resolved to be led away by the difficulties, which, from an obscure or ill-translated text, a priest may throw in your way, be assured that you are far gone from the simplicity of the gospel, and make the scripture a source of infinite confusion.

Having shewn to you, brethren, that Christ and his apostles worshipped one God, the father of us all, I shall remove a difficulty, which evil men frequently throw in your way, slandering us, as if we degraded our saviour. Because we worship only one God, they say, that we dishonour Christ. We give Christ
all

all due honour, but we cannot, without blasphemy, make him equal to our maker. The scriptures are our guide in this respect also. They teach us that, “ Jesus Christ was a man like ourselves, sin only excepted*, that he is the beloved son of God† — the holy one, the just, the prince of life, the lord of all‡ — that he is the lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world§ — that in him, and no other, is salvation; for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved|| — that God hath exalted him, and given him a name, which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus is lord, to the glory of God the Father¶ — that he is made of God, unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption** — that he is ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead††.” — In short, we say with St. Paul, “ that, when God raised him from the dead, he set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but the world to come, and put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which

* Heb. iv. 15.

† Matth. iii. 17.

‡ Acts iii. 14, 15. ii. 36. § John i. 29.

|| Acts iv. 12.

¶ Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11.

** 1 Cor. i. 30.

†† Acts x. 42.

“ which is his body, even the fullness of him that filleth all in all*.”

Thus we give Christ all glory, honour and power, that the scriptures direct to be given, still believing that, “ there is one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all †—that there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus ‡.”

We believe farther, “ that Christ shall return to this earth, shall have dominion over all, putting all enemies under his feet: after which, cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father—then shall the son also himself be subject unto him, that put all things under him, that God may be all in all §.”

Of true christians we say, “ that they are the children of God ||; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ¶. We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone**”. We believe, “ that eternal life is the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ our lord ††.”

But, brethren, if our privileges are great, we know also that we must attend to our conduct, and “ that
“ the

* Eph. i. 10, &c.

† Eph. iv. 6.

‡ 1 Tim. ii. 5.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 24.

|| Gal. iii. 26.

¶ Rom. viii. 16, 17.

** Eph. ii. 19, 20.

†† Rom. vi. 23.

“ the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but
 “ righteousness and peace, and joy in the holy
 “ ghost* ; that we are not to live unto ourselves, but
 “ unto Christ† ; and though it doth not appear, what
 “ we shall be, we are certain, that when Christ shall
 “ appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as
 “ he is‡.”

Thus, brethren, I have, with the utmost plainness,
 spoken to you on subjects of the greatest importance
 to a rational creature. The bible is the rock on
 which I stand, and I exhort you to study it with atten-
 tion, casting off the yoke that narrow-minded priests
 and ministers would impose upon you. And I can-
 not conclude this address to you, without repeating
 my chief positions ; that God is one, and that the
 whole doctrine of the trinity is a libel on the scrip-
 tures, and an insult on the understanding of mankind.

* Rom. xiv. 17. † 2 Cor. v. 14. ‡ 1 John iii. 2.

W. FREND.

JESUS COLLEGE,
 DEC. 25, 1788.

T H E E N D.